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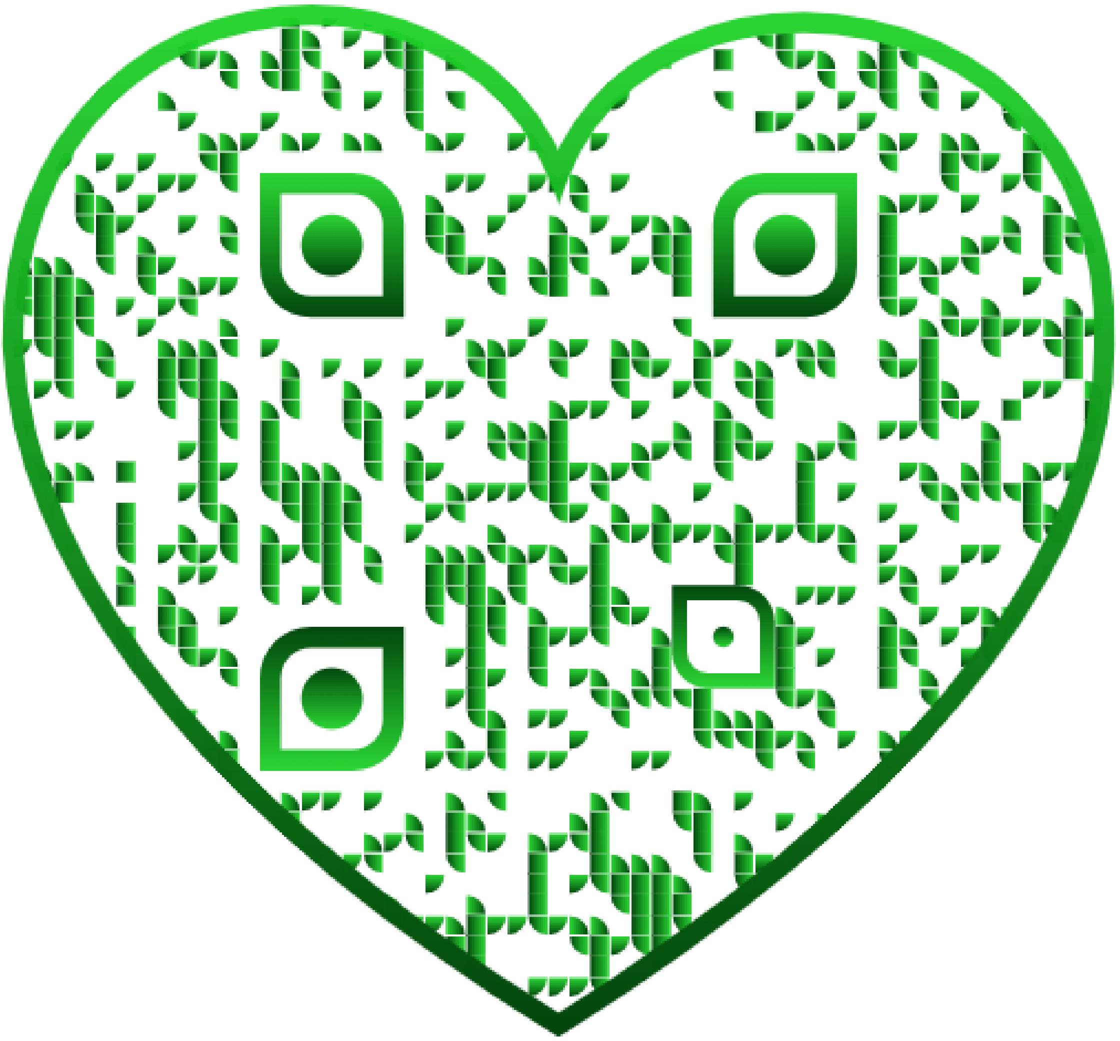
MARKS OF THE MAKERS
From the Emerging Artist's Vision to the Established Master's Legacy

LIVED-IN NARRATIVES

Trickie Lopa's Meditation on Vision, Collection, and a Life Built Around Art

PHP500
ISSN 0119-3945
9 770119 394024



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BLUPRINT IS PUBLISHED BIANNUALLY BY ONE MEGA GROUP, INC.
6th floor, Estancia Offices, West Wing, Capitol Commons, Meralco Ave., 1605 Pasig City, Metro Manila Tel. Nos. Trunkline (632) 8421 8970. Website <bluprint-onemega.com>. <customerservices@onemega.com> Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. While every reasonable care will be taken care by the editors, no responsibility is assumed for the return of unsolicited material. Opinion expressed in this magazine are solely those of the writers and not necessarily endorsed by One Mega Group. Reproduction of photos and articles in full or part is prohibited, unless permission is secured from the editors.

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SENSING SPACES

The interplay between architecture and art is a foundational dialogue in design. Each discipline enriches the other, shaping our physical environments, as well as the cultural and experiential narratives within them.

It is this powerful synergy that we celebrate in BluPrint's first art issue, exploring how this deep-rooted connection continues to evolve. To guide this exploration, we had the privilege of partnering with guest Editor Miguel Rosales, whose curatorial insight and unique perspective were instrumental in shaping a collection of articles that resonates deeply with BluPrint's vision.

The works featured here are conceived as active environments that invite sensory engagement. They are designed to dissolve the boundary between space and observer, allowing the viewer to become a co-creator in the artistic experience.

What you will find in these pages is evidence of the generosity, vision, and artistry inherent in true collaboration. It is proof that when art and architecture converge, they produce spaces that must be felt.

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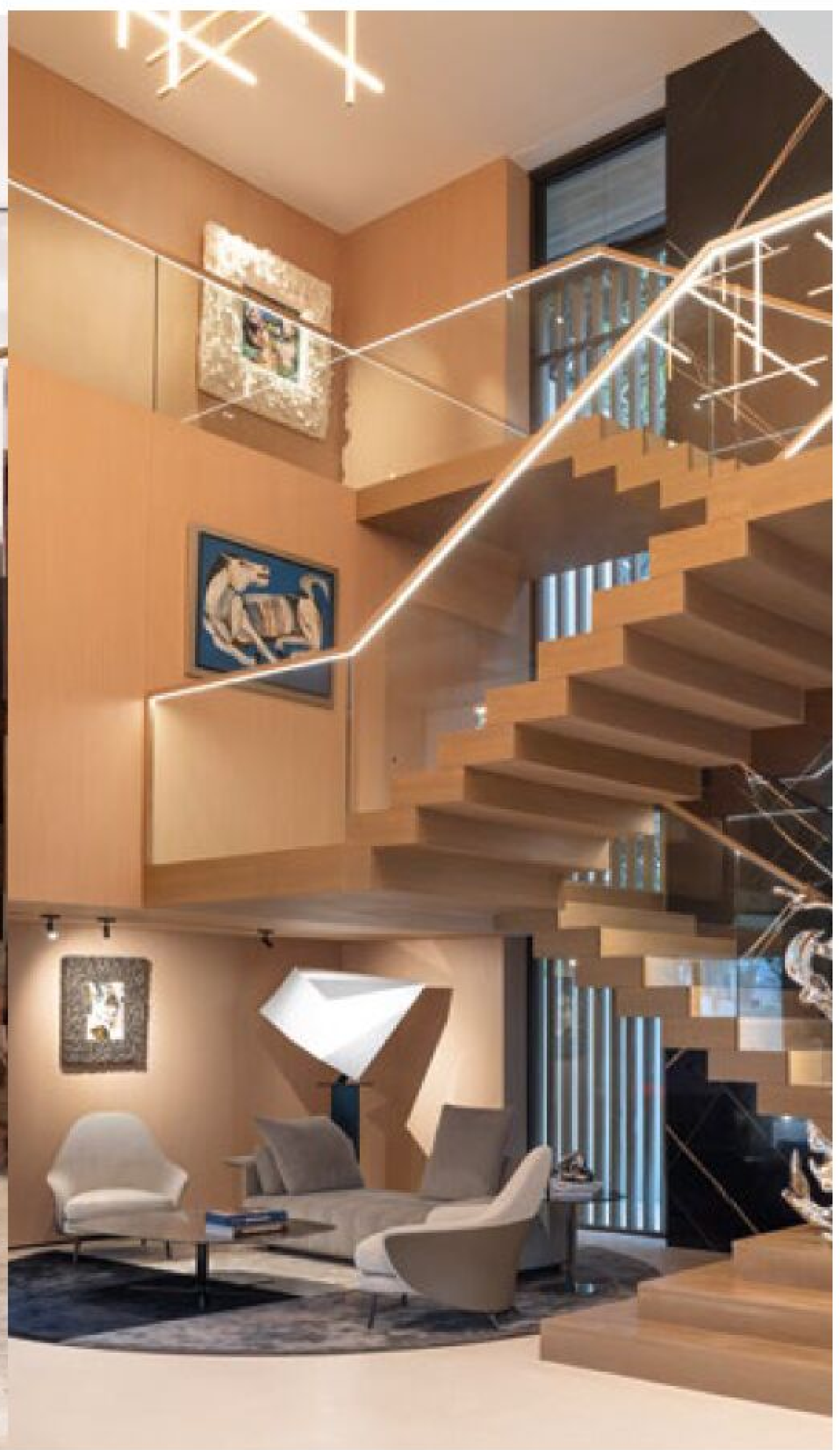
INSTORE AND AT BOCONCEPT.PH

SANTIAGO BOS
PAINTER, MAGICIAN



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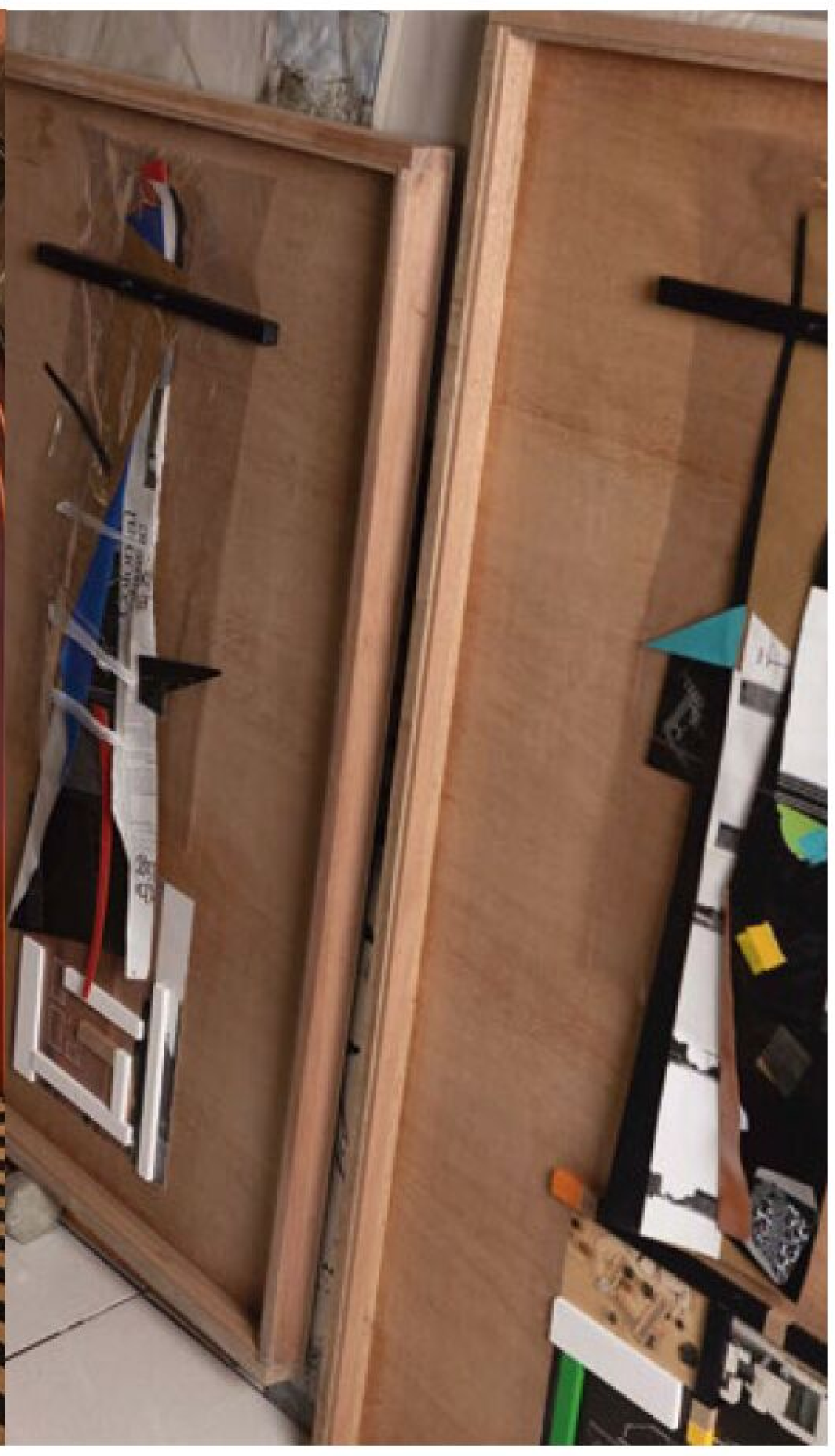

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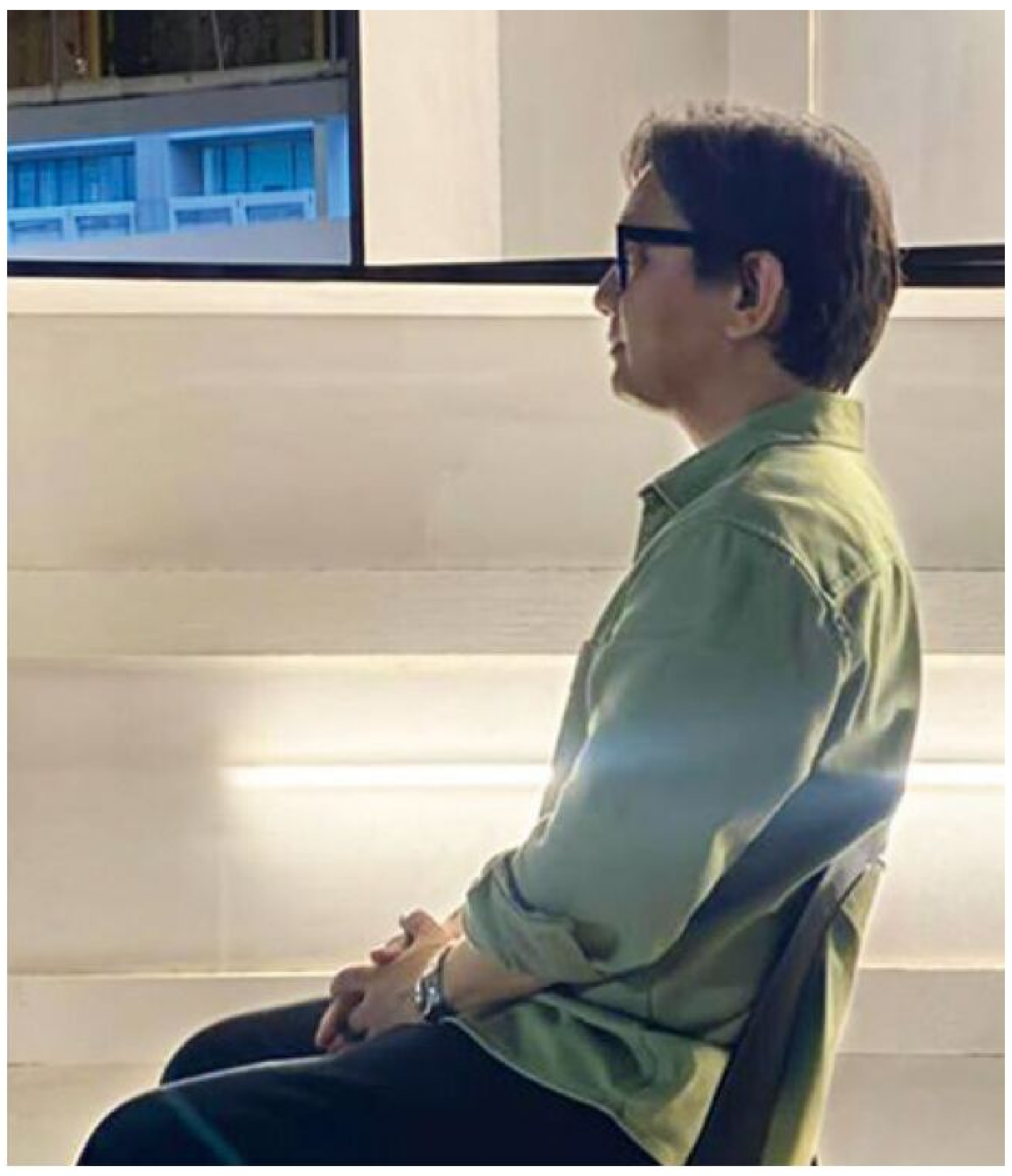
The Power of Art



What is the power of art? I found myself asking this when I was invited to contribute to the inaugural art issue of BluPrint Magazine. And for this special edition, I suggested that we look back in order to move forward.

We begin by visiting a remarkable artist whose practice has spanned decades—transcending trends and remaining steadfast through the years. Joe Bautista's seminal 1979 work Bubong confronted prevailing notions of beauty within the hallowed halls of the Cultural Center of the Philippines so powerfully that it was ordered taken down. In this issue, we revisit his works and discover why he continues to create.

Book lovers will welcome a new volume by Patrick Flores and Lilledeshan Bose on the visionary Santiago Bose—founding member of the Baguio Arts Guild and a pioneering figure who inspired generations of local artists.

From the younger generation making waves, we meet five artists—Celine Lee, Datu Arellano, Kristoffer Ardeña, Nice Buenaventura, and Nicole Coson—whose practices offer strong, distinctive points of view. Their works stand out and continue to push new ideas forward.

We also visit several galleries—some long established, such as Silverlens, Mo Space, and Artinformal, which represent Filipino artists locally and abroad, and others newer and artist-run, like Gravity Art Space, Kalawakan Spacetime, and Mono8 Gallery. These spaces consistently champion emerging talent. We ask them what they observe in the current art scene and where they see it heading.

Taking things indoors, we peek into the homes of several collectors—each brimming with personal style—as they share their collections and the journeys that shaped them. Our cover story explores the home of Art in the Park co-founder Trickie Lopa, where art and design converge in an intimate, ever-evolving portrait of a life immersed in Filipino contemporary art. From condos to houses, from salon-style hangs to minimalist arrangements, these spaces reveal diverse ways of displaying and integrating art into interiors.

Stepping outside, we travel to Lubi Art Island to learn about its collaborative art program that goes beyond convention. We explore several works and uncover the stories behind their creation on this unique island.

In a world increasingly filled with ugliness in many forms, artists and their works offer a positive alternative—sometimes even a welcome escape from the everyday. We are fortunate to live in a country abundant in creativity, with no shortage of it when it comes to art. It is with this spirit of hope that this inaugural BluPrint Art Issue begins an ongoing conversation and exploration of Philippine art, past and present.

Returning to the question that began this piece, I'm reminded of something Stanley Kubrick once said in an interview: "The test of a good work of art is, in the end, our affection for it, not our ability to explain why it is good." His words echo how I feel. Art can move us in many different ways—we can love it or hate it. It can tug at our heartstrings or repel us at first sight. We may not always understand it, but we can never deny its presence. Perhaps we can't even fully articulate how an artwork affects us—but it does. This, to me, is the power of art.

MIGUEL ROSALES
Contributing Editor
BluPrint Art

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An Artistic Legacy of Decolonization

Santiago Bose's legacy takes center stage in a new book by Patrick Flores and Lilledeshan Bose on his influence in Philippine art

---

In more ways than one, Santiago Bose was a pioneering figure in the Philippine art scene. Bose's work was transformative, part of a movement to decolonize the country's culture that continues on even today. His works sought to re-define what "Philippine art" is, removing the stigma on indigenous art and materials to see it as a continual part of our culture, rather than a fragment of our past.

With his solo artistic projects and his collaborative community efforts, Bose put his stamp on our history in a way that thoroughly affects us today. It's something that his daughter Lilledeshan Bose and renowned art critic Patrick Flores have kept in mind in their new book on the artist, *Santiago Bose: Painter, Magician.*

Released by ArtAsiaPacific, it places the legacy of the artist in clear perspective for a new generation of Filipinos, giving readers a look into his inspirations and aspirations for the country as a whole.

"It's important for Filipinos today to know this 23 years after his death," Lilledeshan Bose said, "because as he was building that decolonizing framework, he had to find ways to make it palatable and accessible to a bigger, worldwide audience."

To commemorate the release of the book, the authors spoke with BluPrint to discuss the continued importance of Bose's work to the public, and the collective lessons garnered from his efforts.

Summarizing the life of Santiago Bose

Santiago Bose: Painter, Magician contains photographic reproductions of some of Bose's most iconic work. For Lilledeshan Bose, finding a way to reproduce the works faithfully was an important part of the monograph's creation, because it allowed readers to really understand the innovations of the artist.

As Bose's practice spanned painting, assemblage, sculpture, and other mixed-media forms, translating his work onto the page proved challenging. But the authors were intent on ensuring that readers got the full breadth of how striking and unique his artworks were and what made him distinct in the scene.

"It was an embarrassment of riches," she said, "as we had to balance the visuals with the written work... Because Bose made a name for himself as a visual artist, reproducing the paintings, many of which have not been seen by today's audiences, needed to be the strongest part of the book."

"It's hard to calculate the effect of art on people, but images touch raw nerves," Flores said. "[The] lives of artists inspire. Ideas stir up intuition and instinct. All these lead to different forms of intervention."

The visuals are accompanied by essays from Bose himself, alongside a piece by Flores, who served as the vital "contextualizer" situating the work within the country's cultural and historical moment.

"We published my dad's essays where he talked about building this community and the goals behind it, so you can read what he said in his own words," she revealed.

"In my case, I let the artistic form and social commitment guide the rhythm of the writing," Flores shared. "Across his forms and commitments was this running motif: the craft, condition, and catalyst of difference. Maybe the result is not at all cohesive or coherent, and Bose might favor this indeterminacy."

The Process of Decolonization

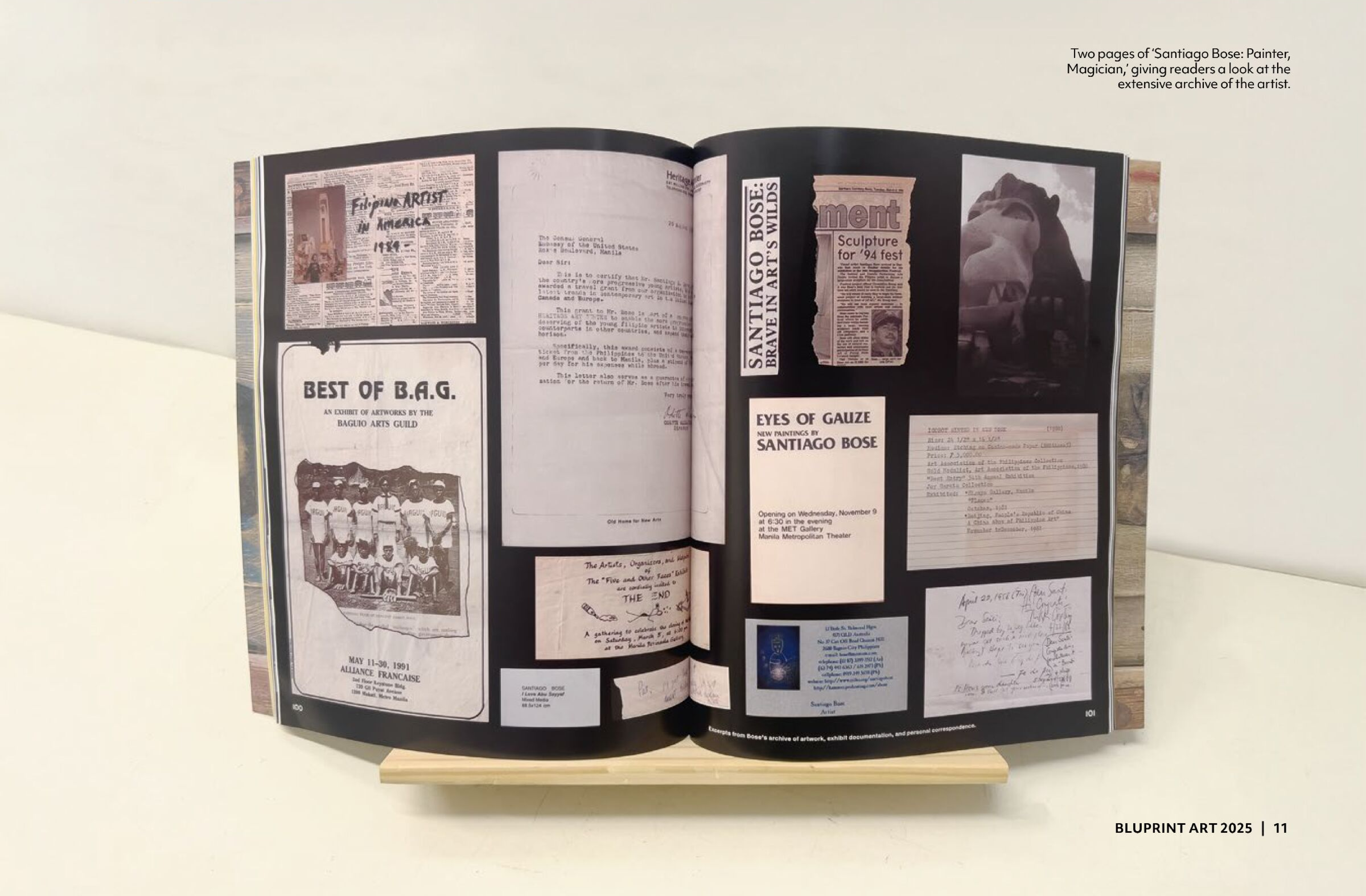
A big part of the book, however, delves into Bose's influence in "decolonizing" Philippine art. Post-colonial theory during Bose's time was still at its infancy; pivotal texts like Edward Said's Orientalism or Gayatri Spivak's conceptualization of "the subaltern" were less than a decade old, and perspectives on how colonialism affected our identity and self-perception were not yet widely discussed in the academic or literary world.

Both authors confront how Santiago Bose and

SANTIAGO BOSE
PAINTER, MAGICIAN
Visaya
WEALTH IS POWER and

A look at the front cover of *Santiago Bose: Painter, Magician*, which attempts to showcase the artist's works and legacy to a new generation of people.

> **"For Bose, the Philippine subjectivity, while distinct, was complex, extremely layered, absorbent but also resistive."**


Filipino ARTIST in America 1984
BEST OF B.A.G.
AN EXHIBIT OF ARTWORKS BY THE BAGUIO ARTS GUILD
MAY 11-30, 1991
ALLIANCE FRANCAISE
SANTIAGO BOSE:
BRAVE IN ART'S WILDS
Sculpture for '94 fest
EYES OF GAUZE
NEW PAINTINGS BY
SANTIAGO BOSE
Opening on Wednesday, November 9
at 6:30 in the evening
at the MET Gallery
Manila Metropolitan Theater
The END
100
101
Excerpts from Bose's archive of artwork, exhibit documentation, and personal correspondence.

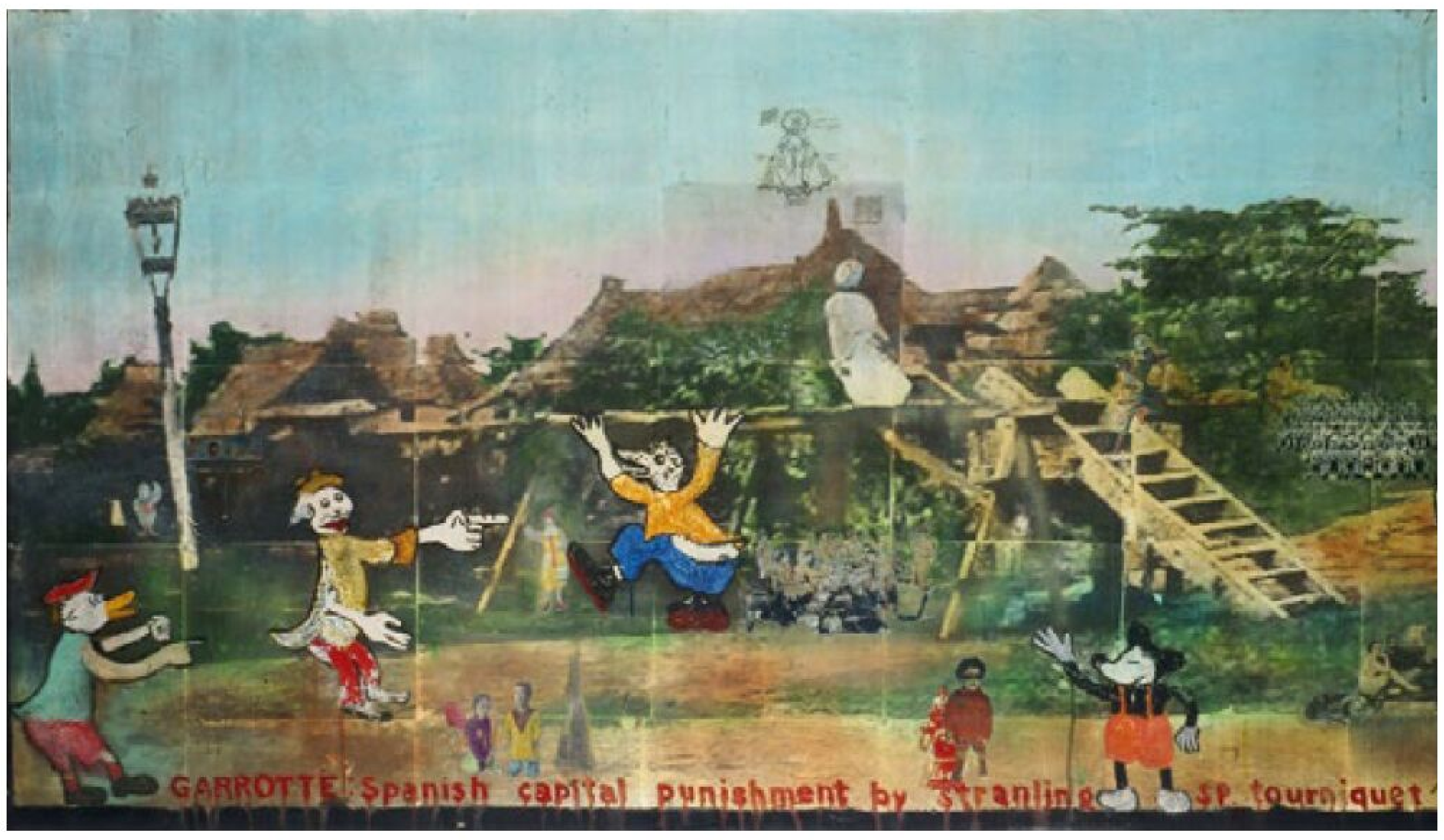
Two pages of 'Santiago Bose: Painter, Magician,' giving readers a look at the extensive archive of the artist.

his contemporaries had to create their own pathways and narratives towards the idea of “decolonization.” They highlight Bose’s use of indigenous materials—an approach that challenged Western-dictated norms by stripping away the stigma of working with what society once considered unsophisticated.

“Part of his process goes back to decolonizing the artistic methods of production; prior to the 1970s in the Philippines not many were using indigenous materials for artwork,” Lilledeshan said. “He was doing it because he believed you didn’t need expensive oils and gesso and canvas to be a Filipino artist, you can also use materials around you.”

Bose’s artistry also combined multiple mediums together, working in performance art, film, illustration, and other formats into singular works that effectively showcase his perspective.

“For Bose, the Philippine subjectivity, while distinct, was complex, extremely layered, absorbent but also resistive,” Flores explained. “He was not one to reduce it or to simplify it. He thrived in difference, mixture, overlapping textures, contrasts, adjacencies. He also would allude to the density and depth of the Philippine experience with colonialism and the struggle to survive, outlive, and transfigure its inheritance.”


GARROTTE Spanish capital punishment by stranling SP tourniquet

“Garrotte” by Bose functions as an example of the artist’s absurdist tendencies, wringing out humor in a distinctive way while still commentating on the lives of Filipinos.

Inherent Politics in Making Distinctly Filipino Art

The artist’s approach allowed his work to grapple with the inherent contradictions of Philippine culture, bringing opposing ideas into direct dialogue: the political implications of utilizing an indigenous voice, the charming wit that made it enjoyable for casual viewers, and the inherent provocation of rejecting acceptability within the mainstream Philippine art culture.

One example is his use of juxtaposition, like contrasting indigenous objects like the bulul with the consumerist debris of Western art and commerce. It commentates on our country’s Western-centrism, and the valorization of foreign cultures over our own home-grown ones.

“By taking the bulul out of the context he always saw it in—sold as a commercial display in arts and crafts stores in the Baguio market, but revered in indigenous homes—he was really asking Filipinos to question the ways they perceived and valued our spiritual guides,” Lilledeshan said. “He was also giving a platform to these powerful spiritual images because he was using them to ‘cast a spell’ over colonial photographs to transform them into inherently Filipino work.”

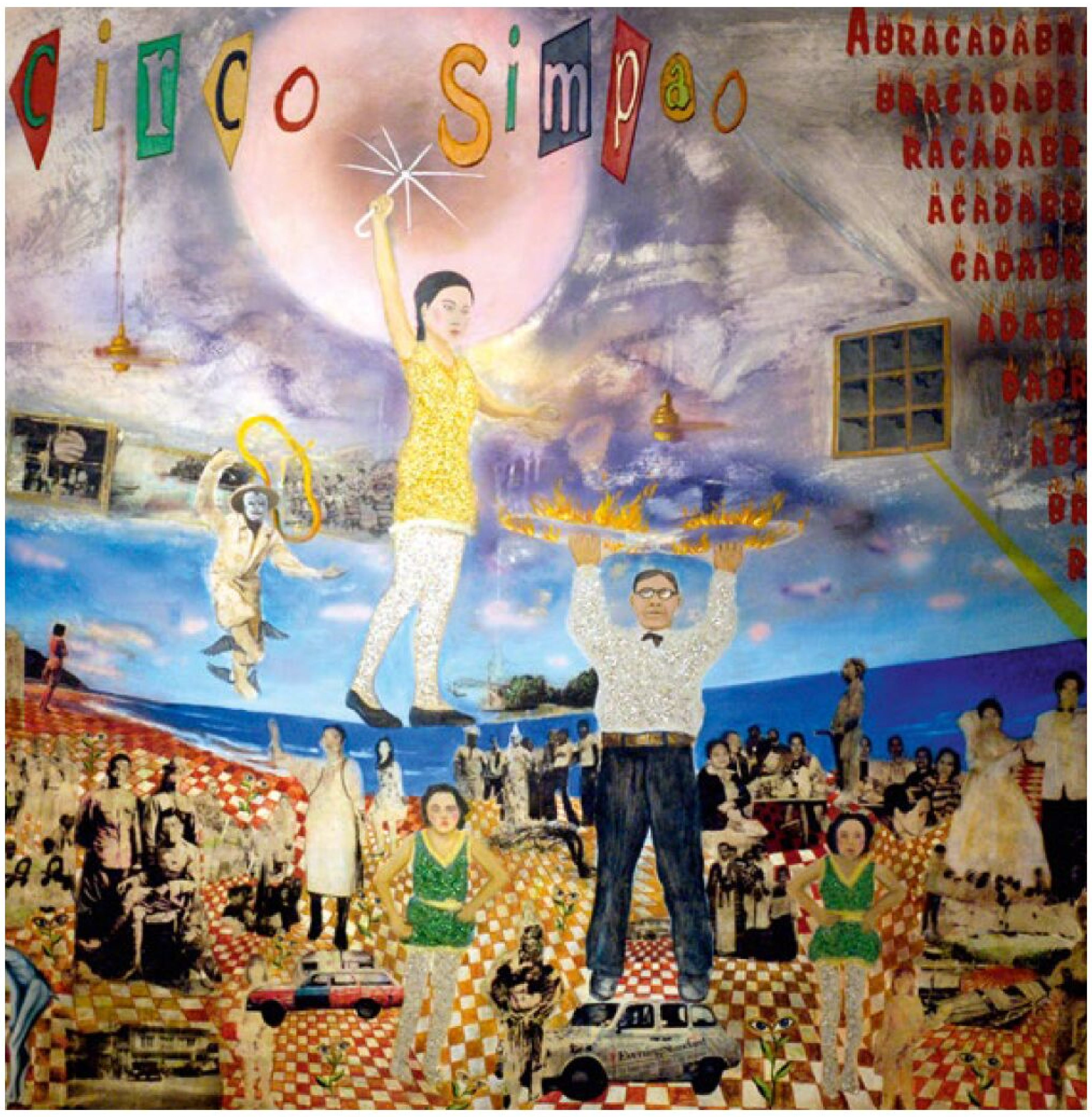
This radical reframing gave his work a distinct voice, one that carried beyond the Philippines and found audiences abroad. These experiences further validated his efforts of decolonizing Philippine art, feeling that there were not enough “Filipino voices” in the international sphere to speak of.

“He realized by being abroad that no one was talking about the experiences he had as a Filipino growing up in Baguio, and that exploring his backyard was richer than copying Western art or trying to compete in their milieus,” she explained.

“Wherever he went, he shared his worldliness, his migrant persona, which intersected with his local and national disposition,” Flores added. “His interaction with fellow artists and thinkers, from the Third World and New York, San Francisco and Bali, Bacolod and Badajoz, gathered for him not only intellectual mileage but also resonances of shared histories and the necessity for solidarity.”

The Baguio Art Guild

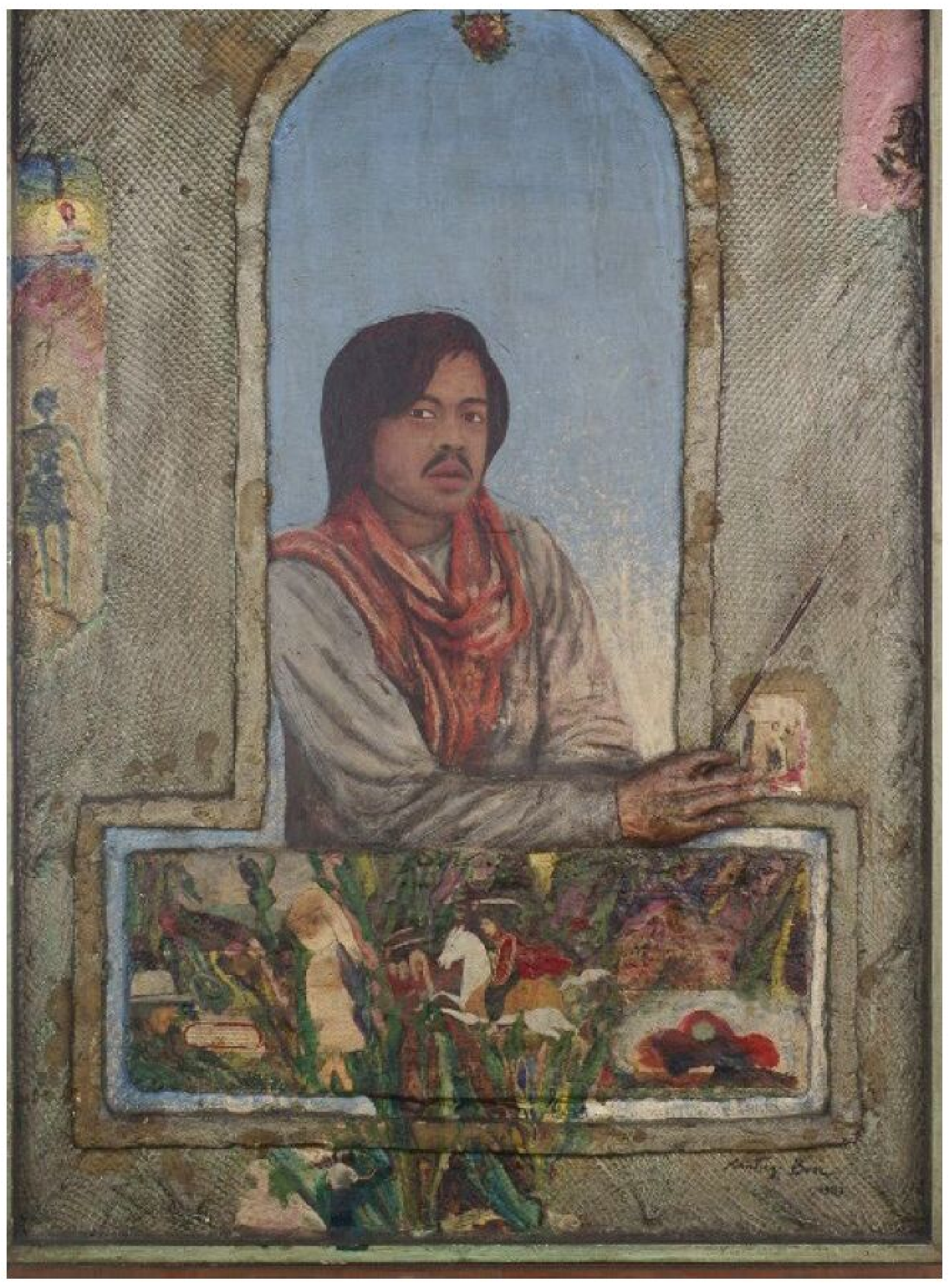
As a part of his efforts to decolonize Philippine art and build communities within the region, an important part of Bose’s legacy was being one of the founders of the Baguio Art Guild. Founded in 1986, it was an assembly of visionary Filipino artists



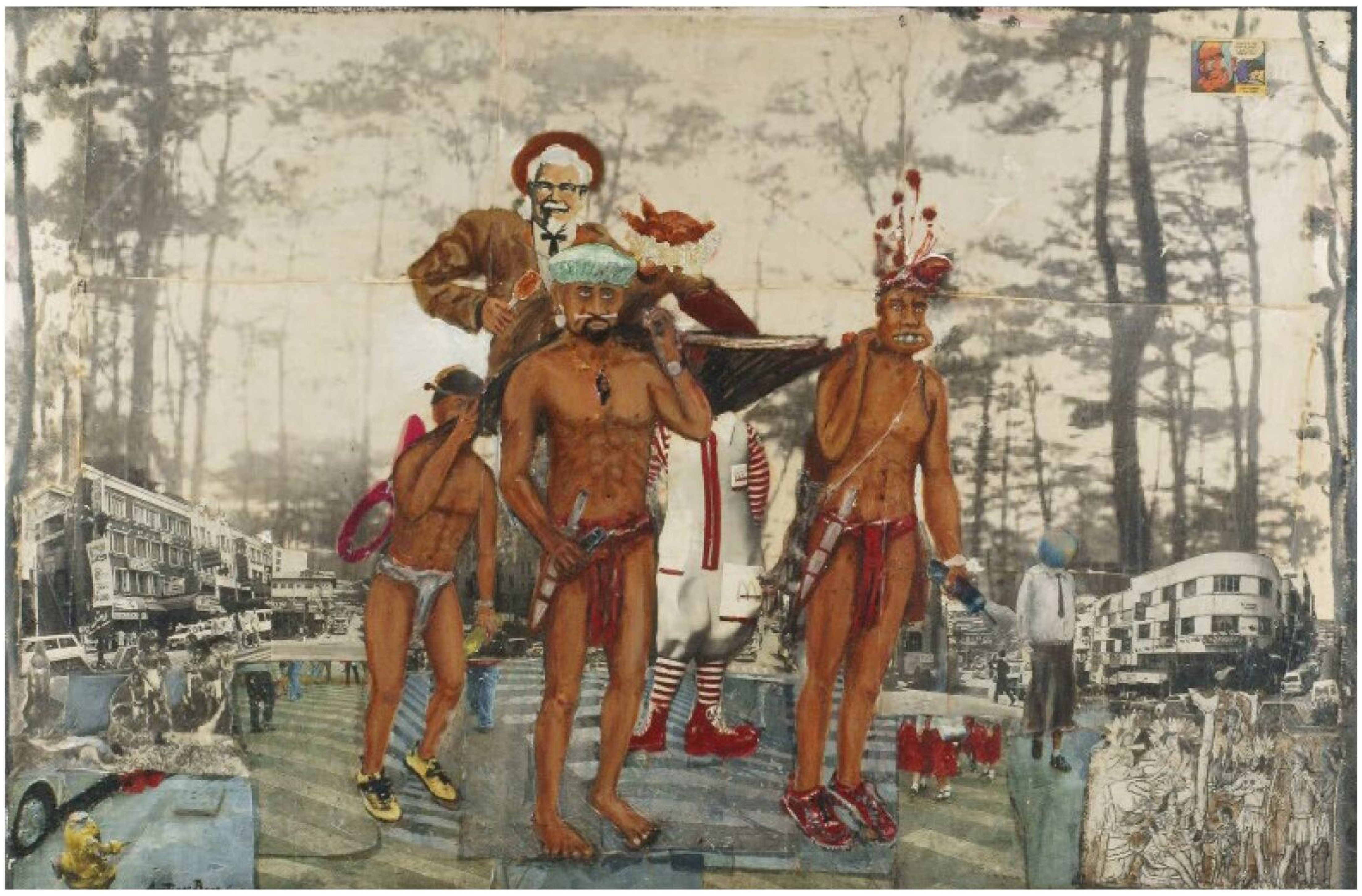
Mixed media and assemblages became one of the signature styles associated with Bose, putting together eye-popping visuals that transports viewers to another realm.

– little brown brothers!
HEVERT
MATCH

The anti-colonial criticism found in Santiago Bose's work questions some of the accepted Western narratives that have seeped into Philippine society.



A self-portrait of Bose, which exemplified his abilities to blend mediums together to engage with viewers.



More than an anti-colonialist, Santiago Bose's art also spoke to the experiences of indigenous people, seeking to exemplify their struggles against Western imperialist forces.

from the region, including such luminaries as painter Benedicto "BenCab" Cabrera and filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik. It has shaped indigenous and Filipino art, helping mentor the next generations of artists in the region.

Both Lilledeshan and Flores believe this group was an extension of Bose's goals of community-building, helping create a distinct local identity.

"The Baguio Arts Guild was created as an anti-capitalist response to Manila [and] the Western world, even though the founders never really spelled it out that way," Lilledeshan posits. "They wanted to create art away from the constrictions of Manila galleries and spaces, and they really were able to build a world that celebrated community by mentoring younger artists who were not fine-arts educated." "Bose was interested in the immediate and extensive world around him, that the air he breathed and the society he lived in was the ground of his experiment with form, both the artistic and the political form of his practice," Flores said.

Bose and his contemporaries used the organization as a way of helping uplift and teach local artists to explore their own forms of expression, turning it into a personal reflection of their surroundings and experiences rather than a facsimile of Western ideals.

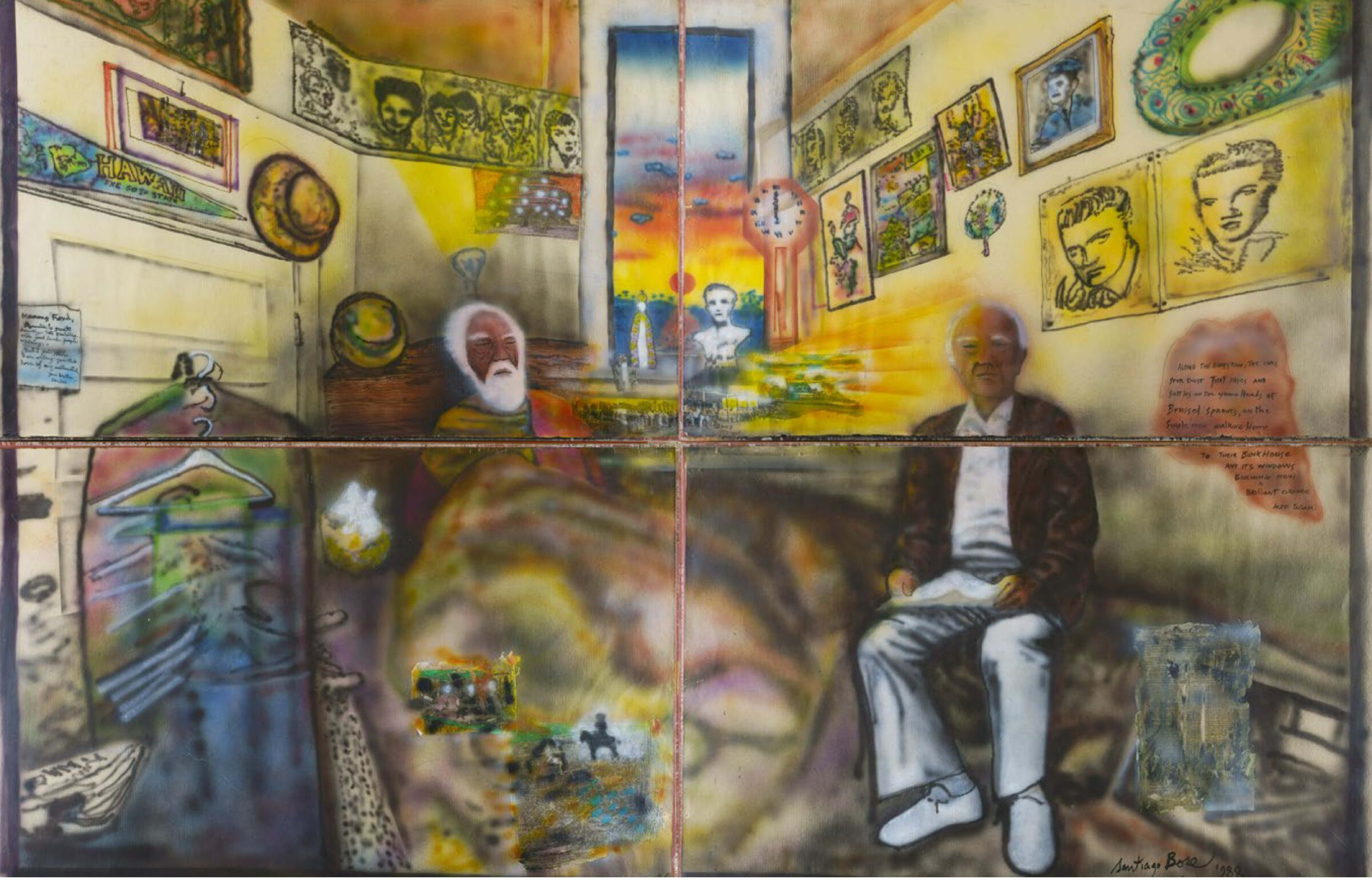
"Many Baguio artists were directly influenced by my dad's processes," she explained, citing artists like Jordan Mang-Osan, John Frank Sabado, and Kawayan de Guia as among those shaped by Bose's philosophy and approach to art. "He was always trying to find new ways to make art. He also mentored young working-class artists in exchange for labor or assistance, so they were able to live with him and see how he worked directly." "He believed in the potency of place and people, so he created conditions of gathering, a contact zone or intersection of diverse sensibilities and interests to form relational forces," Flores added. "He also envisioned an ecology that is not too dependent on but also not disavowing institutional support from bureaucracies, governments, and markets."

The Filipino Fight Continues

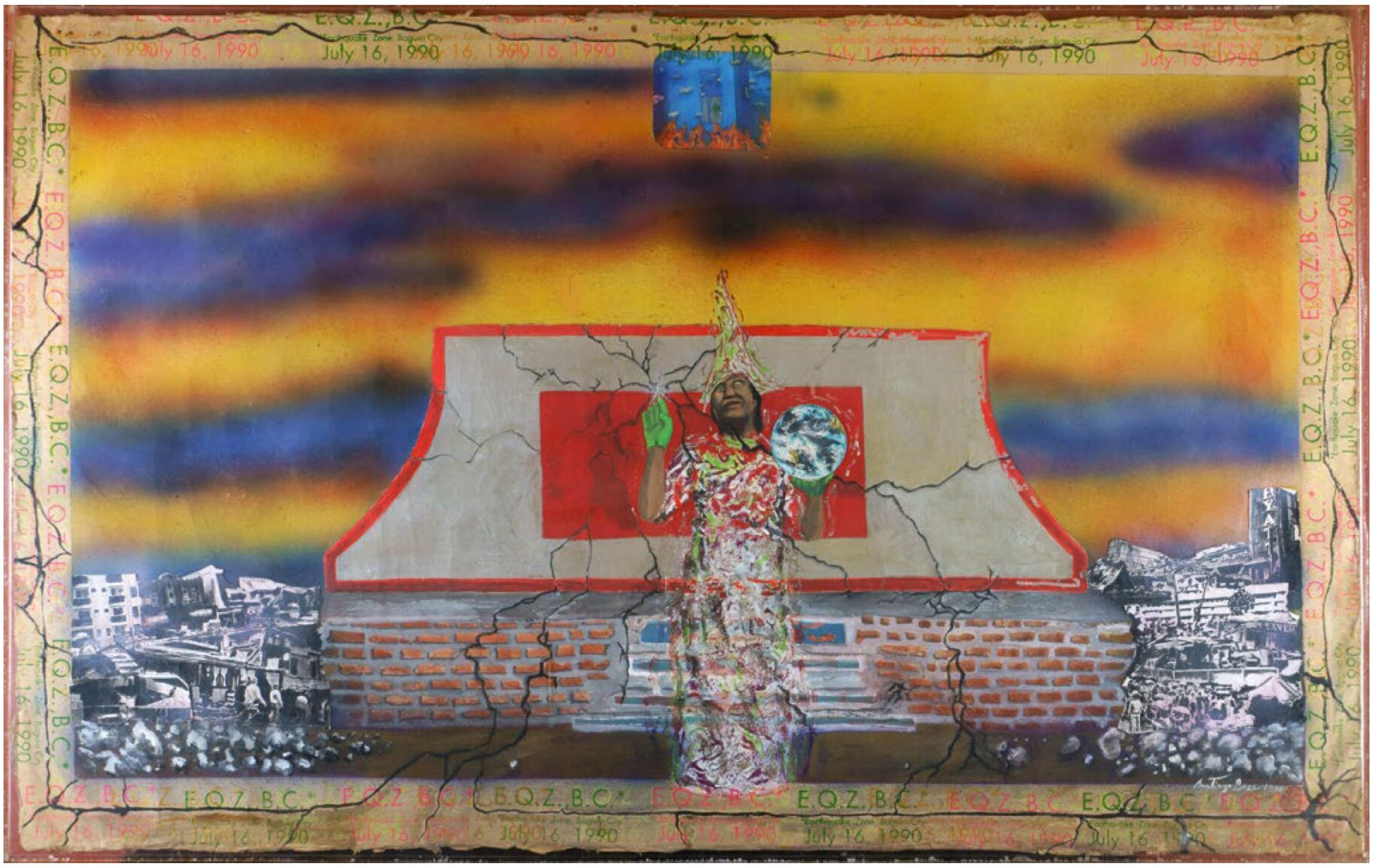
As the book reflects on Santiago Bose's influence on Philippine art, the authors see the book and the work of Bose as a point of inspiration for artists today. It's a legacy that challenges artists to move beyond the canvas—to engage directly with communities, reshape cultural metrics, and imagine a future that is not only better, but distinctly Filipino.

"One of the most vital lessons from his art practice—that I'm still using myself—is that he always told his own stories," Lilledeshan shares. "He never devalued what being Filipino was; he knew our essence was separate from our broken institutions and our colonized histories, and he was always hopeful that by seeking out who we were and interrogating our past, we could build a better future."

"While a stalwart, he was a cultural worker just like countless practitioners in the field," Flores said. "A part of his legacy is his multifaceted practice: that artists distribute themselves across fields and sites to include the studio, the street, the seminar, and so on—and that each field or site requires its own poetics and politics." ▪



Bose's works tend to combine a sense of the fantastical to ordinary situations, bending images to portray the common into something magical.



A staunch activist for many causes, his art portrayed the plight of the marginalized in an increasingly urban-centric society.

WRITTEN BY CHAD RIALP PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

A study in intuitive collecting and intentional design, this home exists as a physical archive of its owner's journey in art and community

Lived-in Narratives

Design
RENE OROSA
Location
MAKATI CITY
Lot Area
586 SQM.
Renovated In
2019

The best homes tell the most compelling stories. Not merely structures of wood and stone, they are tangible records of a life lived. Every space, object, and curated corner becomes a chapter in a deeply personal narrative, revealing passions, connections, and an authentic sense of self. It is a home's ability to evolve with its occupants, absorbing their history and reflecting their true character, that makes it truly exceptional.

Tucked away down one of the narrow streets of Bel Air, one house stands as a vivid chronicle of a deeply personal journey through art. It's a living, breathing space where a collection of Filipino contemporary art coexists with vintage furniture, deliberately transformed into a backdrop for homeowner Trickie Lopa's true passion: supporting the art and artists that resonate most profoundly with her.

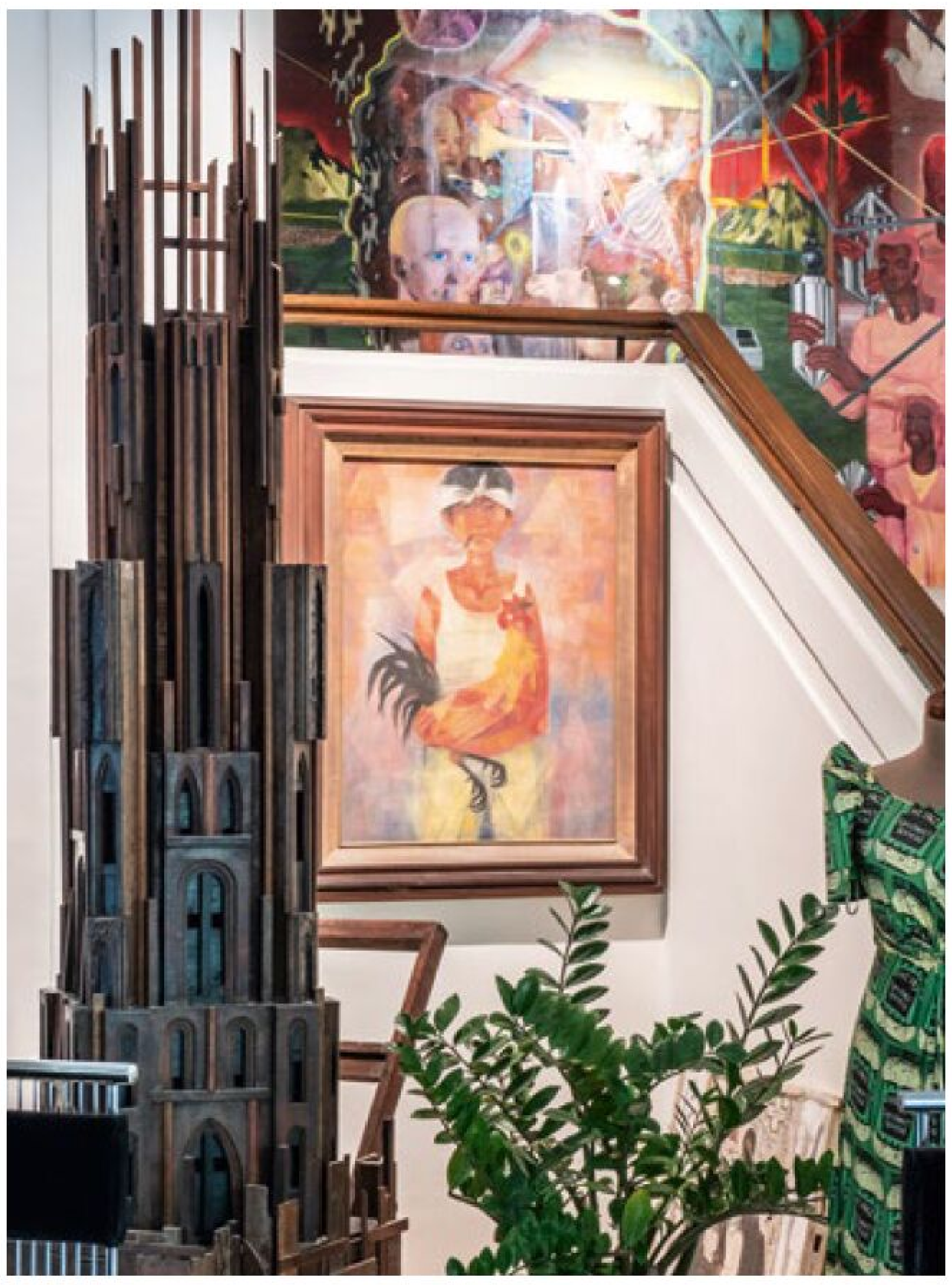
A Living Canvas

The residents acquired the 1950s structure in 2005, a house that had been previously renovated in the 1990s. They chose to refresh the home rather than rebuild it, retaining much of its original midcentury character. Over the years, as their children grew and left for school abroad, the family felt it was time for another update.

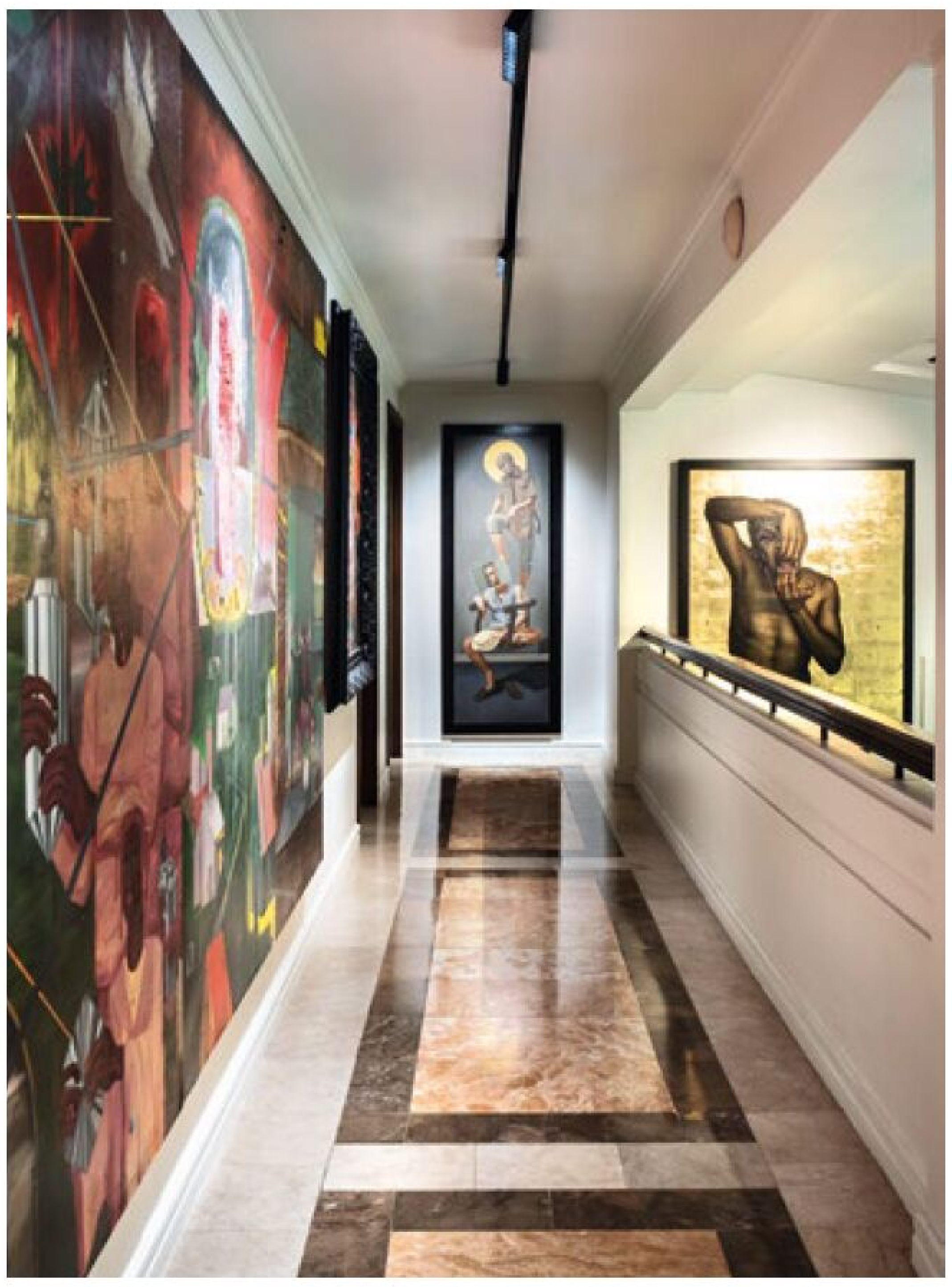
In 2023, they enlisted the help of interior designer Rene Orosa, who implemented non-disruptive changes like painting the walls a neutral color and installing a sophisticated magnetic lighting system. Beginning last year, Norman Crisologo provided a fresh perspective to re-hang the art, giving the collection a new and dynamic arrangement. The house now serves as a canvas, its character subtly present while allowing

A striking welcome to the home's curated collection is a massive mixed-media collage by Kawayan De Guia hangs next to Jose Tence Ruiz's tiered, wooden Kariton Katedral.

Ceramic sculptures by Dumaguete native Mark Valenzuela greet visitors at the front steps.



An eclectic mix of paintings, sculpture, and fashion fills the space, showcasing the collector's varied interests.



Filling every available space with art, from the staircase landing to the long hallway, transforms the home into a private gallery.

the artworks to take center stage.

Art collecting for Lopa began from a place of accessibility and community: Art in the Park. This event became an integral part of her journey, allowing her to interact directly with emerging artists and galleries in an unintimidating setting. She recalls acquiring early works for a few thousand pesos, pieces that have since significantly appreciated in value. Although a happy consequence, it has never been the driving force behind her acquisitions.

Instead, she is guided by an instinctive and intuitive eye, collecting art that resonates with her on a personal, emotional level. As she puts it, "Art should really hit you; hit your eyes and hit your heart." It's a philosophy that has led her to support countless young artists whose works now occupy prominent spots in her home.

Storied Designs

Coming up the front steps, ceramic sculptures by Mark Valenzuela, a Dumaguete native, greet visitors. Past the threshold and into the high-ceilinged, light-filled interior, two prominent art pieces command the space.

A massive, mixed-media collage by Kawayan De Guia – whose work often reflects his Igorot roots in a global context – welcomes you. Right beside it stands one of Jose Tence Ruiz's iconic Kariton Katedral pieces; a tall, dark wooden sculpture on a wheeled base. The tiered, architectural structure is a powerful work that speaks to the Filipino experience.

As you move through the house, you notice the thoughtful pairing of art with furniture. Many of the pieces are sourced from Midcentury Manila, a kinship that developed with the founder during the pandemic. The vintage furniture, with its own rich history and clean lines, complements the art rather than competing with it.

Between the living room and dining room is a recently acquired piece by Brooklyn based, Italian-Cuban artist Amy Bravo, whose work the homeowner discovered at the Swivel Gallery in New York. Mounted on a plinth, the layered canvas features painted and drawn elements, with three-dimensional cutouts of two women. "I like the ballsiness of her work," the collector admits.

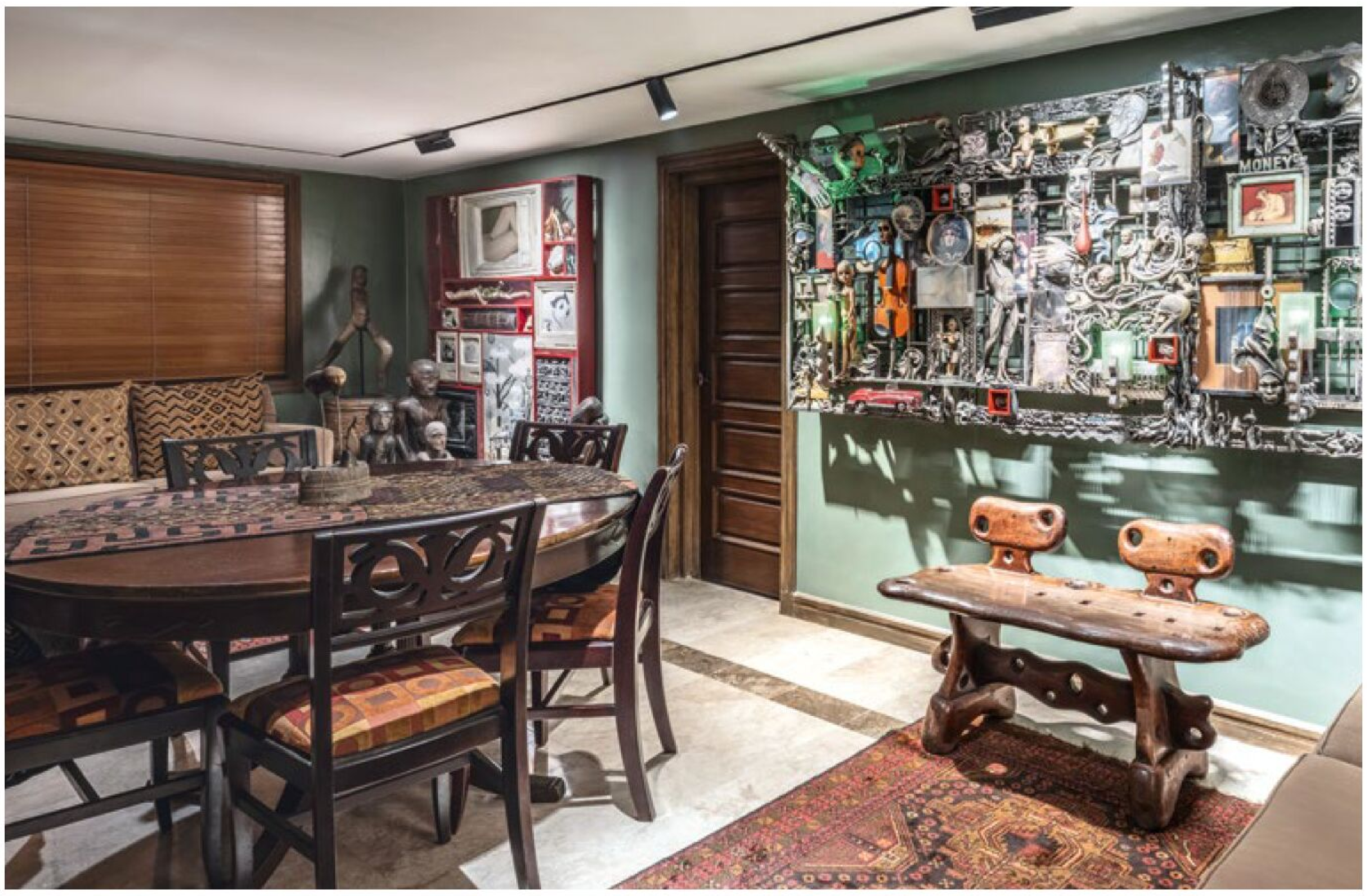
In contrast, smaller, more intimate pieces pepper the space, like the works by Leslie de Chavez and a row of colorful anime-inspired heads by Louie Cordero. Considered unusual when he created them in 2008, they hold vigil over the large dining table.

Other standout pieces are two works by the late Gabriel Barredo, a close and dear friend of the collector. The first

A row of colorful Anime-inspired heads by Louie Cordero mark the entrance into the lanai, a cozy family space filled with cherished art and furniture pieces.

The work by contemporary artist Amy Bravo seamlessly integrates into the living and dining areas, where mid-century modern seating and traditional furniture are paired to complement a wide range of mediums and styles.

A detailed textile artwork with a shell-beaded frame offers a glimpse into the collector's eye for intricate, handcrafted pieces.



The den's dark and moody atmosphere is punctuated by an intricate mixed-media assemblage by Gabriel Barredo and the homeowner's prized collection of bululs.

is a glass table held up by intricate metal work that moves mechanically with browraising complexity. The second, on the opposite side of the room, is a highback chair with wings that also move and lights up when switched on.

"Art should really hit you; hit your eyes and hit your heart."

Cozy Sanctuaries

Over by the lanai, you get a view of the garden and pool. It's a wonderfully intimate and cozy family space filled with cherished inherited furniture and art by a variety of artists. "During the pandemic, I spent a lot of time there," Lopa says. "That was kind of my area... I knew how I wanted it to feel, like a place that was great to sit in, great to read in... Just a nice place to take a break and rest your eyes because of the green that you see outside."

A large work by Melvin Guirhem, who works with fabric and embroidery, hangs on one wall. Across from it is a piece by Yasmin Sison-Ching, from a series of disappeared or erased subjects. Also in this room are two early burlap pieces by Rodel Tapaya and a fabric piece by the young artist Babylyn Fajilagutan, whose abstract images are sewn together with embroidery. Paintings of two women are by Kaloy Sanchez and Leonardo Onia. The latter uses a unique burning technique to add detail to his work.

A few steps down from the living area leads you into the den. The vibe here sharply contrasts the rest of the home: dark and moody with low ceilings. A third Barredo work finds its home here. The large mixed-media artwork is a highly detailed, textured assemblage made from a variety of found objects and materials, creating a complex, three-dimensional surface, dramatically lit from above by a track light.

In the den's far corner, a modest collection of bululs, or traditional Ifugao wood carvings, offers a deeper connection to her roots. Guided by the late playwright Floy Quintos, she shifted her focus from collecting African masks to this more personal, heritage-based collection. Each bulul was chosen for its uniqueness. "There's a story behind each piece," she says. "I don't know how long, how many hours I spent with Floy at his shop, just talking and talking about these pieces."

Space as Self-Portrait

Perhaps the home's most striking feature is its authenticity. It's a space that accurately portrays who the collector is, reflecting an affinity for artists who express themselves freely and are unafraid to show their true selves through their work. This search for genuine self-expression guides every acquisition and defines the character of her home, building a space that stands as a singular, confident statement. As she puts it, "This is what I want to say, and this is who I am. And it comes out in the art I collect."

Ultimately, this is a home that proves an art collection doesn't have to be intimidating or exclusive. Instead, it is a space that celebrates both art and the community that creates it, and how the most valuable pieces are those that are truly and authentically personal. ▣

A sleek, modern black leather sofa is placed over a traditional patterned rug, surrounded by a variety of art from different mediums and artists.

WRITTEN BY CHAD RIALP PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

Ed Calma orchestrates
a multi-level journey
through art and architecture

The Layered Gaze

Design
LOR CALMA AND PARTNERS
Location
QUEZON CITY
Year Completed
2025

A truly dynamic home should unfold over time. This is the power of a layered architectural space—a design philosophy that rejects static, compartmentalized rooms in favor of an orchestrated journey. Through stacked, overlapped, and strategically revealed volumes, a home becomes a narrative, fostering a continuous sense of discovery.

This thoughtful approach has become a recurring theme in architect Ed Calma's work. His project, the Haw Residence, is a multi-level expression of this idea. This home, designed around exotic cars, art, and a specific mode of living, functions like a sophisticated panopticon where sightlines crisscross through floors, creating a profound and ever-changing connection between the residents and the spaces they occupy.

Unifying Motifs

The experience of the residence starts at the frontage, where the home's core philosophy of layering is immediately put on display. The structure presents itself as a dynamic composition of intersecting volumes and voids. Cantilevered upper floors framed in dark, bold lines float above a more transparent ground level, while warm wood accents on the soffits and vertical slats offer a material counterpoint to the cool, pristine finish of the main walls.

Strategic use of glass and thoughtful openings offer glimpses into the interiors, revealing slivers of the life and light within. There is no traditional foyer, but an instant immersion into the home's dual identity as a gallery and a living space. The eye is first drawn to a custom red sculpture

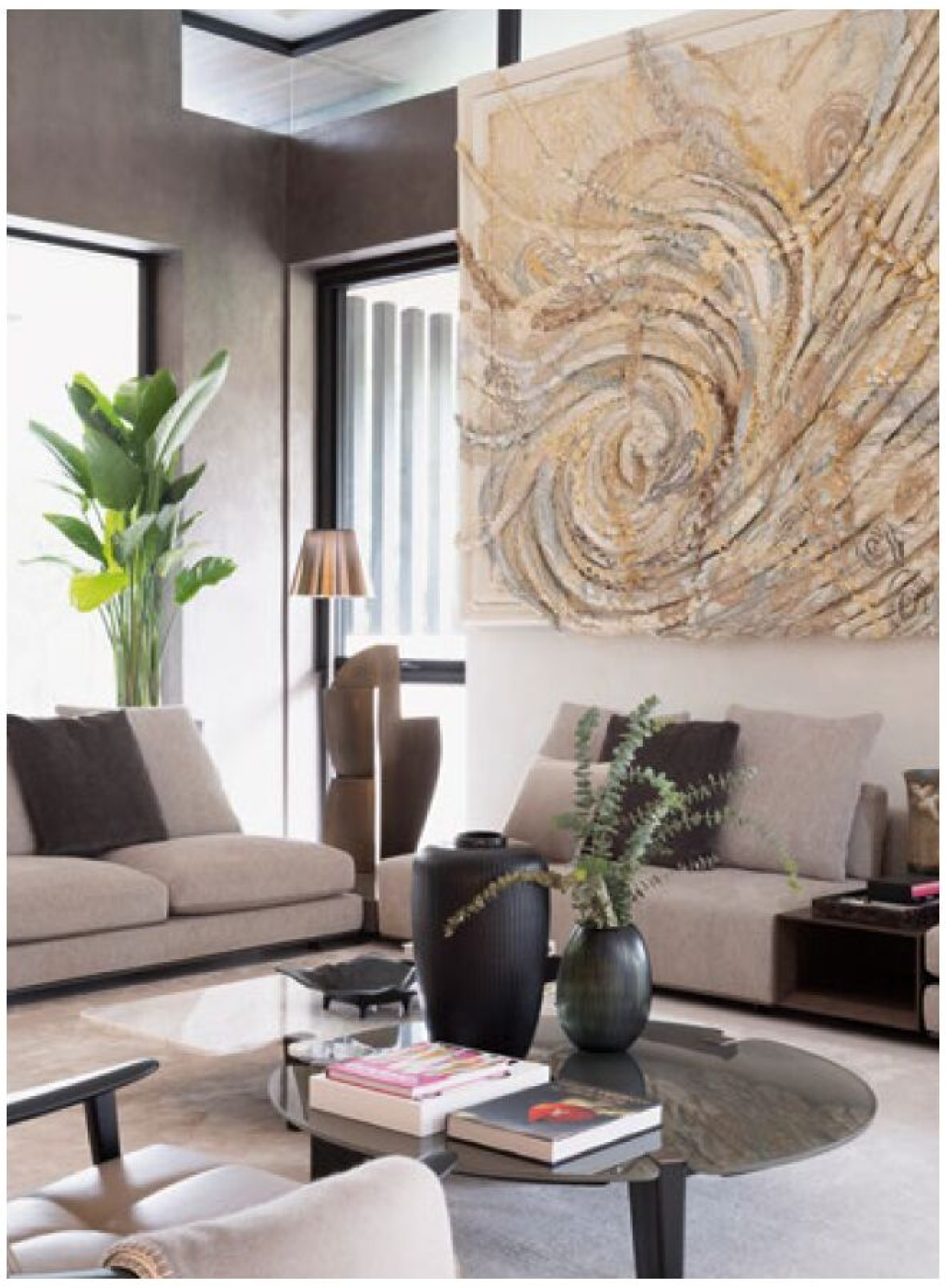
An Escher-inspired staircase dominates the central atrium, acting as the home's primary artery, weaving together all levels into a single, interconnected journey.

Past the formal dining space, the sleek show kitchen unfolds as the next layer in the home's open narrative.

by Jinggoy Buensuceso, which continues as a functional, floating console for keys and display items. Set against the dramatic diagonal veining of Saint Laurent marble, this piece is simultaneously art and function, signaling the thoughtful integration that defines the entire home. From the entry point, the ground floor reveals itself as a single, expansive volume that serves as the primary social and family hub. Calma uses subtle shifts in ceiling heights and strategic partitions to delineate distinct zones. The main living area occupies the central atrium; a near triple-height space that serves as the home's heart.

Tucked beneath the sculptural sweep of the main staircase is a smaller, more intimate seating area, anchored by a work from Ronald Ventura and one of the architect's own sculptures. This cozy nook offers a glimpse through a sliding wooden door directly into the pristine show garage, a portal into the owner's automotive passion.

Adjacent to the main living area, the experience transitions into the formal dining space, anchored by a partition wall also clad in Saint Laurent marble. The veining creates a powerful backdrop for a striking, large-scale painting by Andres Barrioquinto. This separates the dining zone from the sleek show kitchen and den beyond it, maintaining a sense of connection to the home's open plan while creating a distinct and intimate atmosphere for dining.



Presiding over the main living area is the monumental fabric installation.

Running parallel to the dining table is a long, glowing console that appears as a solid beam of light, providing a luminous stage for decorative objects. Above it hangs a work by National Artist Ang Kiukok, its vibrant colors and sharp, expressionist forms offering a compelling contrast to the more figurative Barrioquinto piece opposite it.

Every one of these zones is in a constant dialogue with the narrow outdoor area, visible through floor-to-ceiling glass. A black, edgeless pool stretches towards an elevated lanai at the far end of the property, creating a private, linear oasis that mirrors the home's own layered composition.

Going Vertical

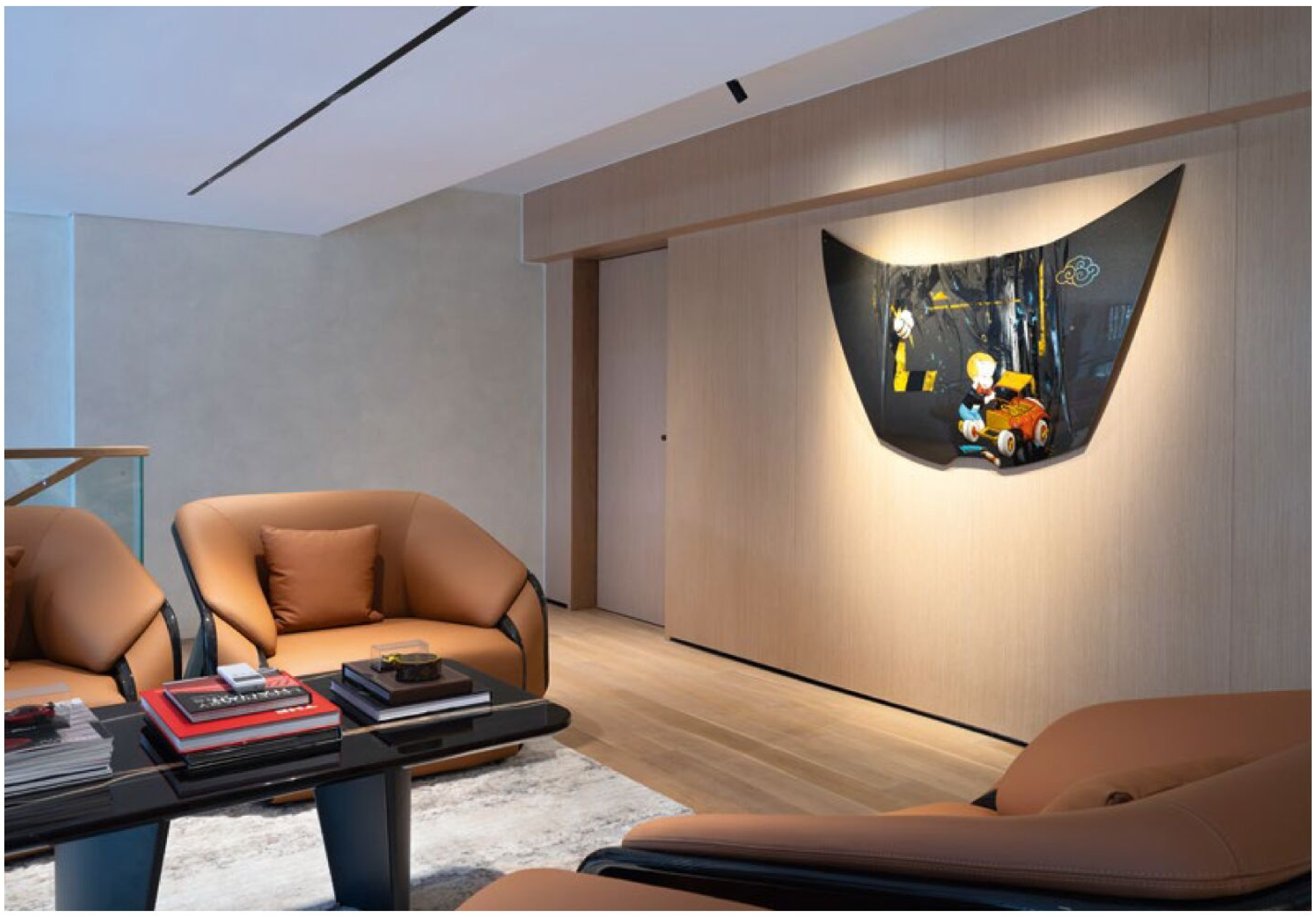
The home's full narrative unfolds through its vertical ascension across the distinct levels. This vertical stacking is unified by the central atrium space, where all floors visually intersect. The staircase, inspired by the inverted perspectives and impossible structures of an M.C. Escher painting is the main artery.

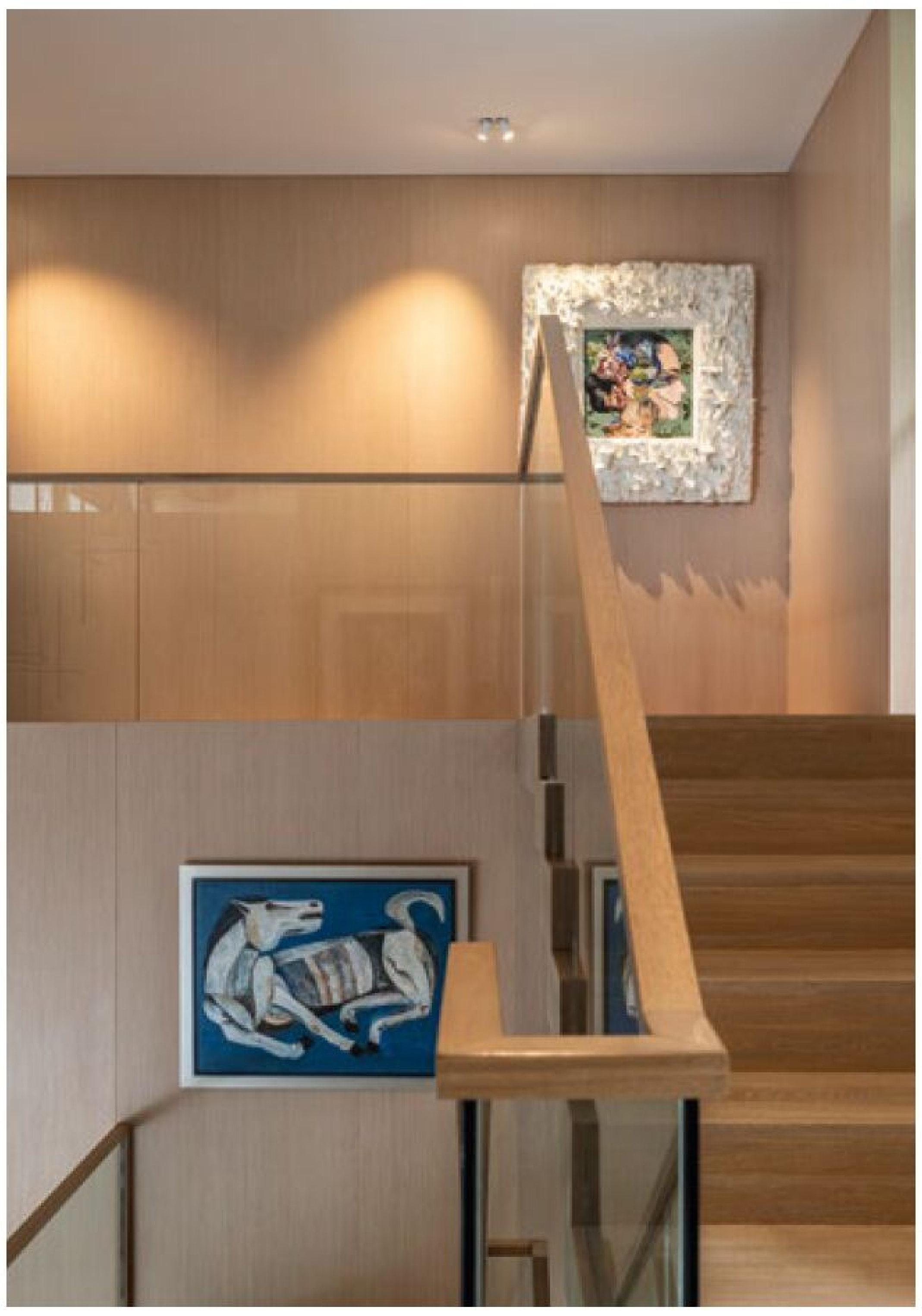
"In every view that you look at the stair, you don't know whether it's upside down or [right side up]," he notes. This sculptural element, along with another freestanding Buensuceso sculpture, reinforces the recurring diagonals seen throughout the home. This visual language brings coherence to the home's complexity, etched into the dramatic gold veining of the marble that clad the walls; the structural and aesthetic logic of the Escher-inspired stairway, with its angular ascent. And it exists abstractly in the dynamic, crisscrossing sightlines created by vantage points throughout the home's levels. This motif ensures that whether one is looking at a surface, a structure, or through a space, there is a consistent architectural harmony at play.

> **"I consider art also as a space, because within that art you have that perspective inside the frame."**

Above the show garage sits a private loft, designed for the owner to entertain clients and formally turn over the bespoke cars he modified. It is both a lounge and a showroom, overlooking the vehicles below. The next level is dedicated to the children, with rooms connected by a long corridor that doubles as a gallery designed

A pristine gallery for automotive form showcases the homeowner's passions.


Perched above the show garage, the loft serves as a private showroom and lounge.



A dialogue between Ang Kiukok and Andres Barrioquinto visions presides over the staircase.

A dynamic sculpture by Jinggoy Buensuceso greets you at the foyer, creating a visual path that leads to the Andres Barrioquinto in the dining area, and culminates with an Arturo Luz at the far end.

to accommodate a growing art collection. This corridor thoughtfully overlooks the lush, undeveloped lot next door, pulling in views of greenery and creating a sense of openness. The primary suite occupies its own wing at the top of the stairs, complete with a formal anteroom that creates a processional entry into the main sleeping and living quarters. The architectural coda is the top-floor bar and lounge area, a dedicated space for entertaining with direct, private access via an elevator from the garage, ensuring guests can be hosted without passing through the main family areas.

While the integration of an art collection can typically become an afterthought, Calma's approach is a true dialogue, where the needs of the art actively shape the structure. Overlooking the main living area is a massive, commanding fabric installation, and the wall it hangs on was specifically designed to fit the large piece, built to the exact width of the artwork. Throughout the residence, works by National Artists Ang Kiukok and Arturo Luz, alongside contemporary giant Ronald Ventura, are strategically placed. Another work by Barrioquinto commands the view at the top of the stairs, creating a focal point for the vertical journey.

To ensure the home remained a warm and livable sanctuary, Calma employed a neutral palette. "My houses normally are very neutral in color tones," he notes. "The artwork, whether it's colorful or neutral, kind of blends with the neutral tones of the house."

The Panopticon Effect

Beyond the physical, there is a more profound layering of perception, a philosophy that extends from the architecture to the very artworks themselves. Calma treats each painting as another layer of space, focusing not just on the foreground but on the background within the frame. "I consider art also as a space, because within that art you have that perspective, inside that frame," he explains.

This is exemplified in the careful framing, which creates one distinct layer, and in the artworks themselves. The pieces possess their own inherent perspectives, creating backgrounds and foregrounds that invite the eye deeper, adding a layer of perception within the canvas. By giving the art the proper architectural context, Calma believes it "reinforces those background views of the painting," treating the canvas as its own three-dimensional world.

This idea of seeing into and through layers culminates in the home's panopticon effect, an organic network of interconnected vantage points. "You want to combine

A simple passage is transformed into a private gallery enhanced the sophisticated lighting design.

the vertical and the horizontal in one vantage point," Calma explains, which in turn "creates that interesting space you want to move through." From the loft, for instance, you get a simultaneous view of the driveway, the cars below, the main living and dining rooms, and sightlines extending to the lounge, pool, and even glimpses of the rooftop bar. Crucially, these varied perspectives allow residents to appreciate the artwork from different parts of the house, seeing pieces not just head-on but in relation to the wider architectural narrative. From the master's bedroom study desk, you can look down and survey the living room, the main staircase, and the art within, fostering a sense of connection and what Calma refers to as "surveillance."

By replacing solid walls with visual openings, Calma creates a house that feels both expansive and intimately connected. "You discover a lot of things as you travel through the house... you actually see almost everything from certain vantage points."

The residence stands as a meticulously crafted landscape for discovery. Ed Calma orchestrated a complex, layered experience designed for movement—a continuous journey where every sightline reveals another part of the story. This insistence on an unfolding narrative creates spaces that never cease to surprise. It proves that the richest and most enduring architectural spaces are the ones that continue to reveal themselves, offering new perspectives and deeper connections long after one has crossed the threshold. ⊟

> **"You discover a lot of things as you travel through the house... you actually see almost everything from certain vantage points."**

On the ground floor, the different living areas exist in dialogue and layered into one interconnected, visually seamless experience.

WRITTEN BY ELLE YAP PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

The Spirare Breathing House combines a neotropical design with a curated mix of past and contemporary Filipino artists to create a relaxing environment for its homeowners

Augmenting Rest with Artistry

Design
FORENHEIT STUDIO
Location
QUEZON CITY
Year Completed
2024

Creating a relaxing environment for the people around us is always a daunting task. In a volatile world that pushes for constant movement, a true place to unwind and relax feels utterly inaccessible. And yet, the Spirare Breathing House provides its homeowners with that: an outlet sensitively made to not just ease the mind, but to engage in one's culture within the place.

Designed by architect Eloy "Earl" Bello VIII of Forenheit Studio, the Spirare is an architectural response to the pressures of modern professional life, offering a much-needed sanctuary for a family of four. Having already known them socially, Bello was largely given free reign at the design of the house.

"The homeowners had one key request: they wanted the house to feel like a hotel," he said. "[This meant the house had to be] relaxing, pleasant, [and] it has to have a quiet sophistication. Beyond that, they gave us full creative freedom to interpret what that could mean for their lifestyle."

Ideal Spots in Suburbia

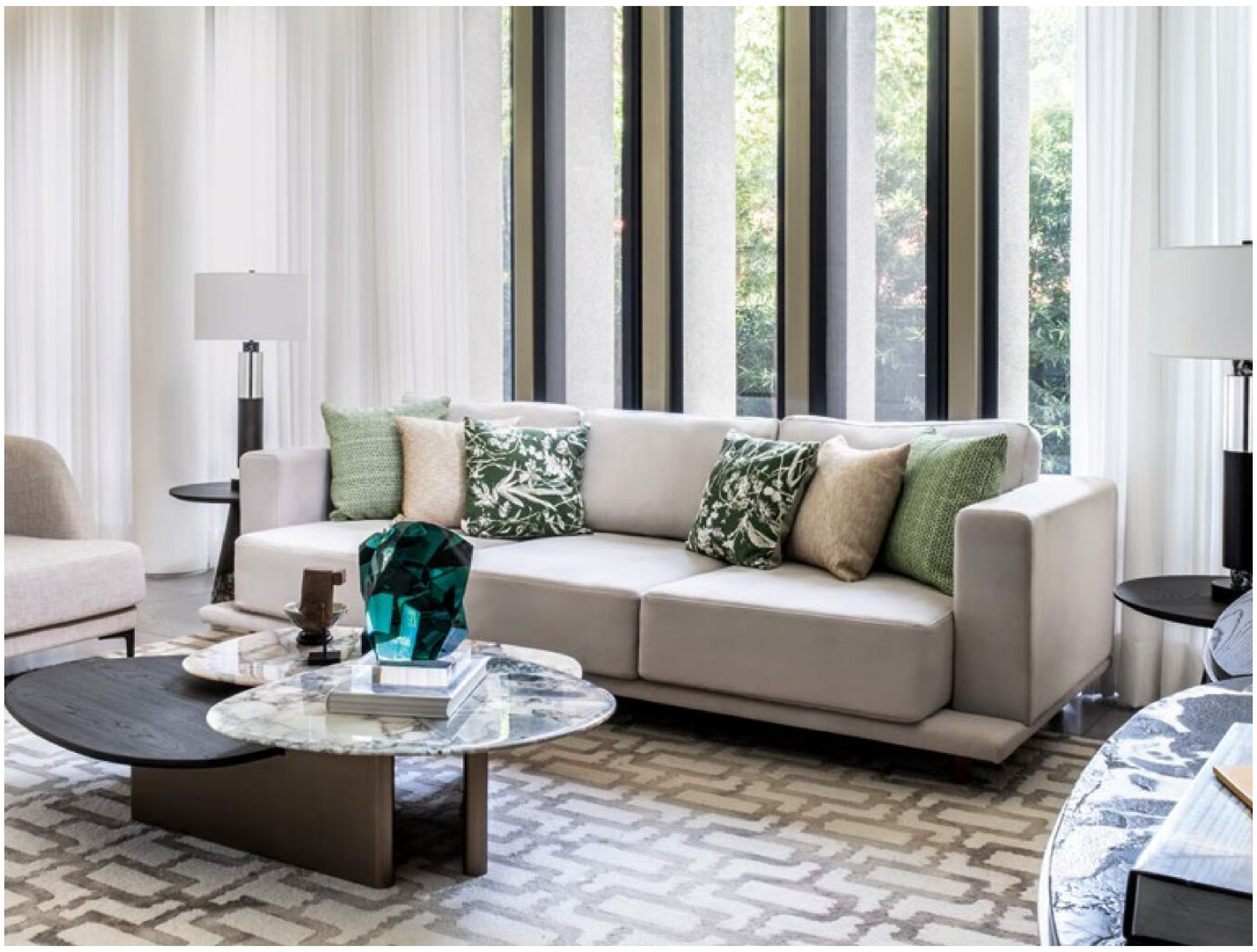
The Spirare occupies a prime corner lot in a Quezon City suburb. For Bello, this strategic location, combined with the clients' brief and the firm's familiarity with the area, provided the ideal canvas to experiment with a new paradigm for domestic tranquility.

"It presented a rare opportunity to create a home with a strong architectural presence from multiple vantage points," he said. The site's western orientation directly informed the home's architectural strategy. Responding to the challenge of harsh solar exposure, the design prioritized passive cooling and the strategic placement of openings to ensure thermal comfort.

Navigating construction during the pandemic meant confronting significant budgetary pressures from supply chain disruptions and soaring material costs, which heavily influenced the design. "We had to refine and rework several elements, not to compromise the design, but to ensure its practicality," Bello shared. "Some features were scaled back

The Spirare's neutral color palette, splashes of nature-driven design, and open-air design forms a tranquil atmosphere that flows with the energy of the homeowners.

Forenheit Studio focused on smooth geometric shapes and neutral colors to provide a calming surrounding for the homeowners.



Splashes of green, including from a glass sculpture by Ramon Orlina, provide a break from the monochromatic color scheme.

or substituted with more cost-efficient alternatives that still maintained the same spatial experience and aesthetic."

Serene and Tropical

For the final choice of design, he went with a new interpretation of a neo-tropical house. It was one that really aspired towards blurring the built environment with the nature around it, with an emphasis on smooth lines and lightness. The house found ways to augment the warmth of its surroundings, providing a sedate ambiance that encouraged slow and intentional living.

"The inspiration was both contextual and conceptual," he said. "It is rooted in the homeowners' lifestyle, the climate, and the opportunity to contribute something fresh and uplifting to the character of the subdivision."

For the exterior, Bello added four-inch vertical fins on the western portion of the Spirare to filter and soften the light that came in. This also allows for natural ventilation, creating channels that allow gentle breezes to move unimpeded through the home's interiors. The soft, neutral palette of whites, greys, and warm browns minimizes solar heat gain while enhancing the home's tropical aesthetic.

"It is one that celebrates lightness, and plays with a balance of vertical and horizontal elements," he said. "These gestures not only shape the home's elegant massing but also contribute to a facade that remains sophisticated, whether finished with high-end materials or value-engineered alternatives."

The Spirare's lush, curated landscaping is a mix of towering trees and manicured gardens that affords the homeowners and their children a brightly-lit yet breezy area for play and leisure, which molds itself to the neotropical design.

"Every space was planned with intention: from cozy, intimate corners for solitude, to open, airy areas that encourage light, movement, and connection," Bello said. "The aim was to create a deeply personal and restorative environment; a home that serves as a retreat after long and demanding days."

Interiors That Move with the Environment

Inside, Bello wanted continuity between the tropical nature of the exterior and the more modern elements of the interior. Thus, for much of the home, sliding glass doors minimize the rigid barriers within the property.

The home's design had to conform to a strict two-storey height restriction. To counteract this, the design cultivates an interior sense of openness through high ceilings, expansive glass, and minimal solid barriers.

The living room utilizes sculptures by Arturo Luz and Ramon Orlina to match the calm sophisticated interior.

CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE
Architecture in the 20th Century
TASCHEN

The interior carries over the exterior's neutral palette, with the tasteful addition of wood accents to add more warmth while maintaining its connection with the outdoors. Alongside its use of smooth stone walls, there's a feeling of fluidity and flow within the interior that promotes relaxation for the residents.

"The overall mood we wanted to create was one of calm, comfort, and ease," Bello said. "A home that supports both rest and routine, designed around how the family truly lives."

"These finishes, paired with thoughtfully chosen materials, reinforced the idea of quiet elegance and low-maintenance luxury," he continued. "Together, the spatial planning, material palette, and subtle transitions create a mood that is serene, grounded, and deeply livable."

"It was one of those rare projects where the alignment between the site, the client's trust, and our vision created a truly joyful design experience."

Art As An Accent

During construction, the homeowners approached Bello to discuss incorporating art pieces to add another layer of relaxation. Although not part of the original budget, Bello worked to accommodate them by approaching space curator and art expert Glenn Cuevo for the project.

The Joel Reglos monochromatic art piece pulls the room together, blending well with the relaxing monochromatic color scheme of the room.

The minimalist edge of the Spirare Breathing House extends to the kitchen, whose marble interiors and consistent color scheme allows for a clean, yet tactile experience.

"[He] reached out to me to check my interest in the interior styling, art selection and curation of a residential project he recently completed," Cuevo said.

"Fortunately, the design's clean lines and generous wall surfaces naturally lent themselves to accommodating art, allowing the pieces to breathe and become focal points within the home," Bello recalled.

Cuevo himself found the design of the Spirare to be impressive: "contemporary and well-balanced with clean lines." The neotropical design prompted him to look for artwork with abstract figures and geometrical shapes, also focusing on an elegant, color palette to best complement the home's composition.

"The client preferred a styling and curation emphasizing a balance of simplicity and timelessness," Cuevo said. "They also wanted to have an interior that is warm and welcoming, and that they would enjoy for many years."

This meant a mix of contemporary artists with Philippine masters to really highlight the smooth lines and compositions of the project. Classic sculptures by Arturo Luz and Ramon Orlina, for example, subtly add color and texture. A work from a series of "Sabel" lithographs from Benedicto "Bencab" Cabrera softens the home's imposing linear structure.

Collaborative Efforts

Cuevo's main focus for the art collection was to ensure that it easily weaved through the building's core design. The artworks added individuality and complexity to the home without detracting from its ethos of a relaxing enclave. In other words, the art stood out without being distracting.

"My style is streamlined contemporary to achieve a refined, no-clutter, cohesive look and feel. I added a slight twist for this project with a careful juxtaposition of old and new, using oriental antiques and modern elements, thus adding warmth, character and charm."

In the end, the collaboration between Cuevo, Bello, and the homeowners yielded a cohesive collection of artworks that satisfied the homeowners' desires for added texture and personality. Both Cuevo and Bello were complimentary of the curatorial choices made, crediting their collective efforts for making it work within the context of the house.

"Intentionality is key," Cuevo shared, "Every interior styling detail is carefully thought out. The same applies for each painting and each sculpture for this home project. This is to consistently create beautiful, harmonious vignettes, thus highlighting the visual appeal and aesthetic quality of the artworks."

"What began as a functional, minimalist canvas evolved into a richer environment where architecture and curation coexist, proving that even thoughtfully placed

Many of the walls of the Spirare contained artworks from different artists, curated for the family to create an inquisitive touch.

additions made later in the process can elevate the experience of a space," Bello added.

> **"Every space was planned with intention: from cozy, intimate corners for solitude, to open, airy areas that encourage light, movement, and connection."**

Intentionality of the World Around Us

Since they moved into the Spirare Breathing House, the homeowners shared that despite their high-stress work environments, they haven't gotten sick once since moving in. Bello saw this as a win on his part: the house did its job of lulling its owners towards a tranquil state, allowing them to recuperate properly from their professions.

"More than just being seen, the design of the house is something you truly feel," Bello stated. "Visitors often remark that the house has a unique calmness, a kind of architectural clarity that's hard to capture in photos or plans. It's a space that really needs to be experienced firsthand to be fully appreciated, one that speaks not only through form and function, but through atmosphere and feeling."

From the warm, tropical exteriors to the curated, well-chosen artistry that hangs on their walls, the Spirare Breathing House is the epitome of a peaceful sanctuary. It fulfills the promise of what a house can be: providing reprieve from a nonstop, tempestuous cityscape and restoring them to their fullest selves. ◼

Vertical fins were added in the Western side of the Spirare, allowing it to filter the sunlight coming through the house, mixing the neo-tropical and modern aspects of the architecture.

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WRITTEN BY CHAD RIALP **PHOTOGRAPHED BY KEIRAN PUNAY**

A family's story unfolds through a masterful collection of art and design

Every Room a Chapter

Design
GRACE REYES SERAPIO AND MC KEVIN DUMLAO
Location
PASIG CITY
Lot Area
720 SQM.
Year Completed
2025

Few challenges are as complex as the multigenerational home. How can we foster togetherness without sacrificing privacy? This remarkable residence, born from a son's vision for his mother, called for a delicate balance—demanding expansive, open areas for gatherings alongside intimate corners for personal retreat.

Solving this duality led the design team to a "contemporary classic" approach, a philosophy Interior Designer Grace Reyes Serapio defines as ″a marriage of the modern and the timeless.″ Realizing this vision required a deep synergy between Reyes Serapio's firm, Grace S. Reyes Designs Inc., with Interior Architect Nathan Langreo, Interior Designer Deniese Micutuan, the home's architect Mc Kevin Dumlao, and of course, the client himself. This collaboration would ultimately transform a series of structural constraints into a seamless architectural story.

Set on a 720-square-meter lot, and completed over the course of seven years, the ambitious 883-square-meter home plan was immediately met with the realities of its context. "We had to be mindful of the village guidelines, think carefully about which spaces to prioritize, and still make sure the layout felt open and uncluttered," the homeowner shares. The design program was extensive, calling for private rooms for his mother and two brothers, a guest room, a fully-equipped gym, and an imaginative use of the house's top level as an observatory deck with views of the city skyline.

From these needs, a list of non-negotiables emerged, forming the project's unwavering foundation: absolute comfort, ample and intelligent storage, an abundance of natural light, and spaces designed for the practicalities of everyday life.

As a renovation, the project also inherited structural realities. "We encountered significant challenges, particularly with the existing beams and columns that disrupted the openness of the layout," Reyes explains.

The living area's double height ceiling provides a dramatic space for large gatherings while showcasing Jude Tiotuico's mixed media sculpture and American artist Mr. Star City's King of Ethiopia.

These constraints, however, became catalysts for creativity, prompting the team to devise clever solutions that would ultimately define the home's unique character.

An Architectural Promenade

The narrative of the home begins at the approach. Architect Mc Kevin Dumlao's work orchestrates a deliberate journey of arrival, where a gentle water feature introduces a calming auditory element. The monumental scale of a solid magkono wood entry door signals a transition from the public world to the private. "It is an experience akin to slowly turning the pages of a storybook," says Reyes Serapio.

Passing through this threshold, you're enveloped in a sense of composed tranquility. The foyer unfolds not all at once, but with intentional sightlines and immediate functionality. From this central point, the ground floor branches out to serve the family's diverse needs. To the right is the home gym; to the left, an elevator provides seamless accessibility to all floors, a key consideration in this multigenerational home.

Nearby, the powder room reveals the project's meticulous attention to detail. This intimate space, which underwent numerous iterations to perfect, becomes a jewel box gallery for a striking nude by Marcel Antonio, offering a moment of quiet contemplation.

> **"Each room deepens the narrative."**

From the foyer, the eye is inevitably drawn to the home's centerpiece: the grand staircase. It's a jaw-dropping dialogue of materials, with the floating oak treads ascending with an engineered lightness, contrasting with the monumental, textural stone wall that acts as the home's spine.

A frameless glass bannister preserves the visual drama, and the hand-hammered metal handrail resting atop the glass completes the narrative. Its subtly uneven texture, custom made by artist Jude Tiotuico, offers a tangible connection to the hands that crafted it. This single element bridges the entire design concept—connecting the cool precision of the glass with the rugged honesty of the stone. It's a moment of pure architectural sculpture, transforming a functional necessity into the home's most dramatic and story-rich feature. This journey flows naturally toward what the homeowner fondly calls "the heart of the home": the living room. "It's where everyone naturally gathers, whether for family time or when friends come over," he says. This is the home's nexus; a bright and welcoming hub that perfectly embodies the family's desire for togetherness. Here, the eye is drawn to the King of Ethiopia by American artist Mr. Star City, which serves as a powerful focal point.

Prominently mounted above the main living area, Jude Tiotuico's mixed-media sculpture is a dynamic collage where matte orange shapes float above a rugged landscape of hammered metals. The artwork serves as a powerful study in duality, creating a dialogue between the industrial precision of its graphic forms and the raw, artisanal texture of its organic layers.

A Room in Bloom

Adjacent to the living area, the open-plan design continues into the sleek, open show kitchen. Tucked away discreetly to the side, a service kitchen houses the heavier appliances and prep work, maintaining the main area's uncluttered aesthetic. The quiet, meditative abstraction of a Miya Ando piece, for instance, graces the breakfast nook, setting a contemplative tone. The ground floor's narrative culminates in the dining room, a space curated with intention, where even daily

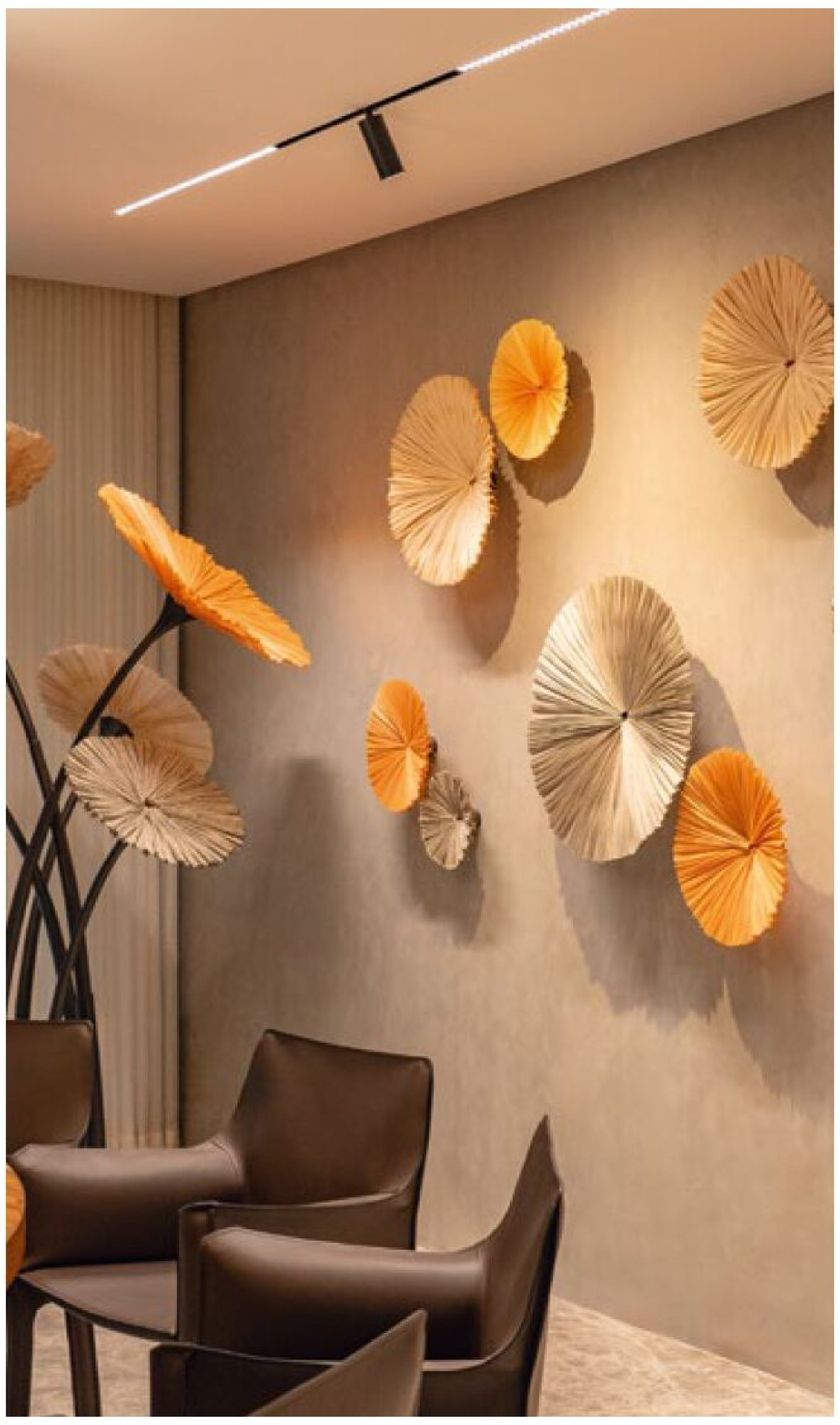
In the foyer, curated touches make a first, definitive statement.

Even within the social hub of the show kitchen, moments of artistic pause are found through a meditative Miya Ando piece gracing the breakfast nook.

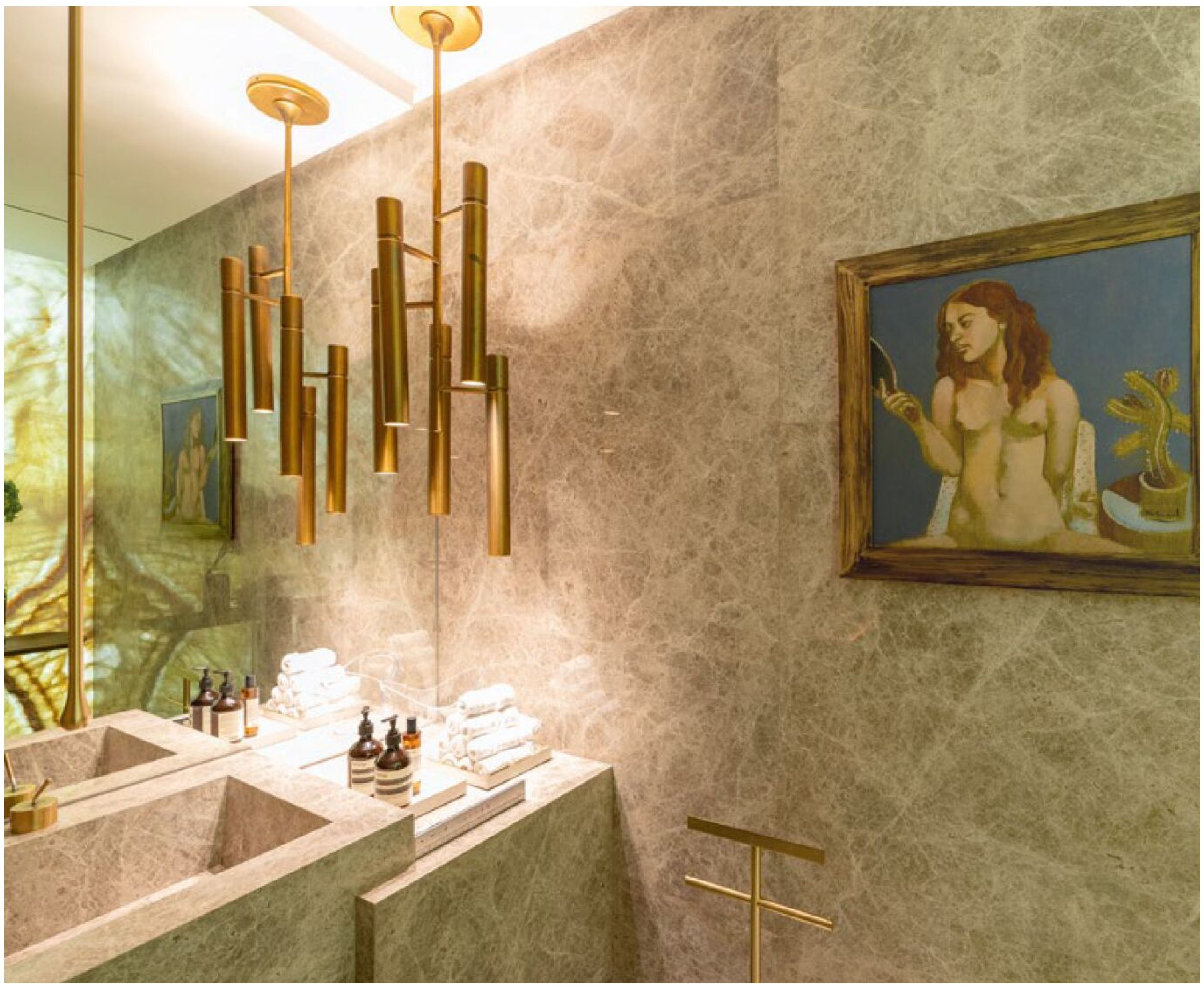
A dialogue of materials: The engineered lightness of floating oak treads ascends against the monumental gravity of the home's textural stone spine.

Intentional sightlines encourage exploration, with Mr. Star City's King of Ethiopia serving as a focal point.

SSIBLE COLLECTION



A spectacular sculptural installation by Olivia d'Aboville surrounds iconic Mario Bellini chairs, transforming the space into a breathtaking indoor garden and creating what the artist calls a "feeling of abundance."



Meticulously detailed, the powder room is transformed into a jewel box gallery for a striking nude by Marcel Antonio.

rituals are elevated by art. "It's another favorite, thanks to the installation featured there," the homeowner confirms. "It sets the mood of the space and makes it feel truly memorable."

> **"It is an experience akin to slowly turning the pages of a storybook."**

A solid narra wood table and Mario Bellini's iconic CAB 413 chairs for Cassina provide a timeless, grounding foundation. The greyscale walls serve as a quiet, refined canvas for the room's spectacular centerpiece: a multi-part sculptural installation by artist Olivia d'Aboville.

The commission began serendipitously, when the homeowner, having seen d'Aboville's work from the Révélations fair in Paris, reached out to her on Instagram. A tight deadline for the photoshoot prompted a burst of creative problem-solving. "The only way to make this work was for me to use existing textiles I had in stock," the artist explains, "I proposed to the client to mix and match the textiles, which would give a more dynamic feel." The homeowner's vision, in turn, pushed the artist's minimalist aesthetic toward a grander scale. "He wanted a large number of flowers," d'Aboville recalls, "I've learned that sometimes, more is more!"

The final installation is a breathtaking indoor garden: nine large, hand-painted flowers bloom over the buffet, fifteen smaller blossoms dance on the opposite wall, and three free-standing sculptures rise from the corners. The circular forms of the pleated raffia flowers echo the round dining table, creating what d'Aboville describes as a "feeling of abundance." Beyond their immense beauty, the textiles serve a practical purpose, softening the acoustics in a room framed by glass walls. "I hope my installation brings a feeling of balance and peace and happiness to the ones dining within it," she says.

Singular Spaces

In the end, this home serves as a quiet manifesto. It makes the case that a residence can be both a world-class gallery and a deeply personal sanctuary, that Filipino craftsmanship can define modern luxury, and that the most successful designs are born from a shared, unified vision. "Each room deepens the narrative," Reyes Serapio concludes, and in this project, the final story is one of balance, beauty, and belonging—a design narrative, masterfully told. ■

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WRITTEN BY DANIEL LAMPA PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

In a condominium high above Makati, a collector has built a life surrounded by art, his home transformed into a narrative of passion, memory, and style

Ritual, Memory, and Rhythm

Design
JAMIE TAN
Location
MAKATI CITY
Lot Area
300 SQM.
Year Completed
2019

The moment you step inside his home, it becomes clear that art here is not mere decoration. Paintings rise floor to ceiling, sculptures command the corners, and every wall carries a story. The rooms unfold like a living gallery where masters stand alongside emerging voices, and where each piece is not only displayed but lived with.

Known in luxury circles for running a consignment business specializing in watches and designer bags, he carries with him the sharp eye and discernment of his trade. Yet at home, he is not a merchant of objects but a collector of meaning, his spaces shaped less by commerce and more by instinct, memory, and desire.

Beginnings of a Collector

His journey into collecting began in his late twenties, almost by chance. It was not a canvas that first drew him in but a book, a coffee table volume devoted to Ang Kiukok. Captivated by its pages, he found himself returning to them again and again. A year later, when a friend decided to part with an oil on wood painting by Kiukok, he seized the moment. That work, still in his collection today, marked the quiet but decisive beginning of his life as a collector.

From that point, his appetite for art grew alongside his personal and professional life. As his business prospered, he moved from one condominium to another, each time choosing a larger unit, each time filling its walls with new acquisitions. The spaces he occupied became extensions of his evolving collection, growing not just in number but in depth and significance.

Guided by Instinct and Connection

For him, collecting has never been about following trends or chasing prestige. A work must speak to him, stir a feeling, or evoke a memory. When a piece commands a high price, he weighs its investment potential, but instinct always comes first. With established masters, he moves

An eclectic art collection covers the dining room wall from floor to ceiling.

Two Ramon Orlina glass sculptures provide the foreground for the homeowner's prized pieces, including a Fernando Zobel.

> **"To live with art is to fold it into the smallest moments of the day."**

carefully. With emerging artists, he allows himself freedom, delighting in the discovery of voices not yet fully known.

This instinctive balance has given his collection both breadth and intimacy. Masters like BenCab, Ang Kiukok, and Fernando Zobel are present, their works anchoring his walls with gravitas. Alongside them are bold contemporary names such as Nicole Coson, Jigger Cruz, and Marc Aran Reyes, their canvases pushing against convention with restless energy.

He is equally drawn to younger painters like Chelsea Theodossis and Nic Navarro, whose earthy palettes and quiet tonalities bring calm and groundedness into his home. Together, they create a dialogue across generations, a collection that reflects not only art history but also the rhythm of his own journey.

Art as a Daily Ritual

To live with art, for him, is to fold it into the smallest moments of the day. At night, before retiring, he often walks through the rooms of his home, pausing to take in the works around him. Some pieces recall milestones or personal triumphs. Others carry the weight of sentiment, gifts from his parents that root him to memory. The house feels alive because of them, each canvas and sculpture holding a presence that extends beyond the surface.

Among the works that hold special resonance is an Annie Cabigting painting he long desired. After years of patience, the right piece appeared at the same moment a major business deal closed. The convergence of timing made the acquisition feel almost destined, a reminder of how art and life often intertwine.

Another piece of deep significance is a Ronald Ventura canvas showing a man pointing to his head surrounded by swirling numbers. He acquired it while recovering from surgery, at a time when he struggled with lapses in memory. The painting mirrors both his vulnerability and his resilience, becoming not only an artwork but a marker of survival.

> **"Art is not about ownership but about life."**

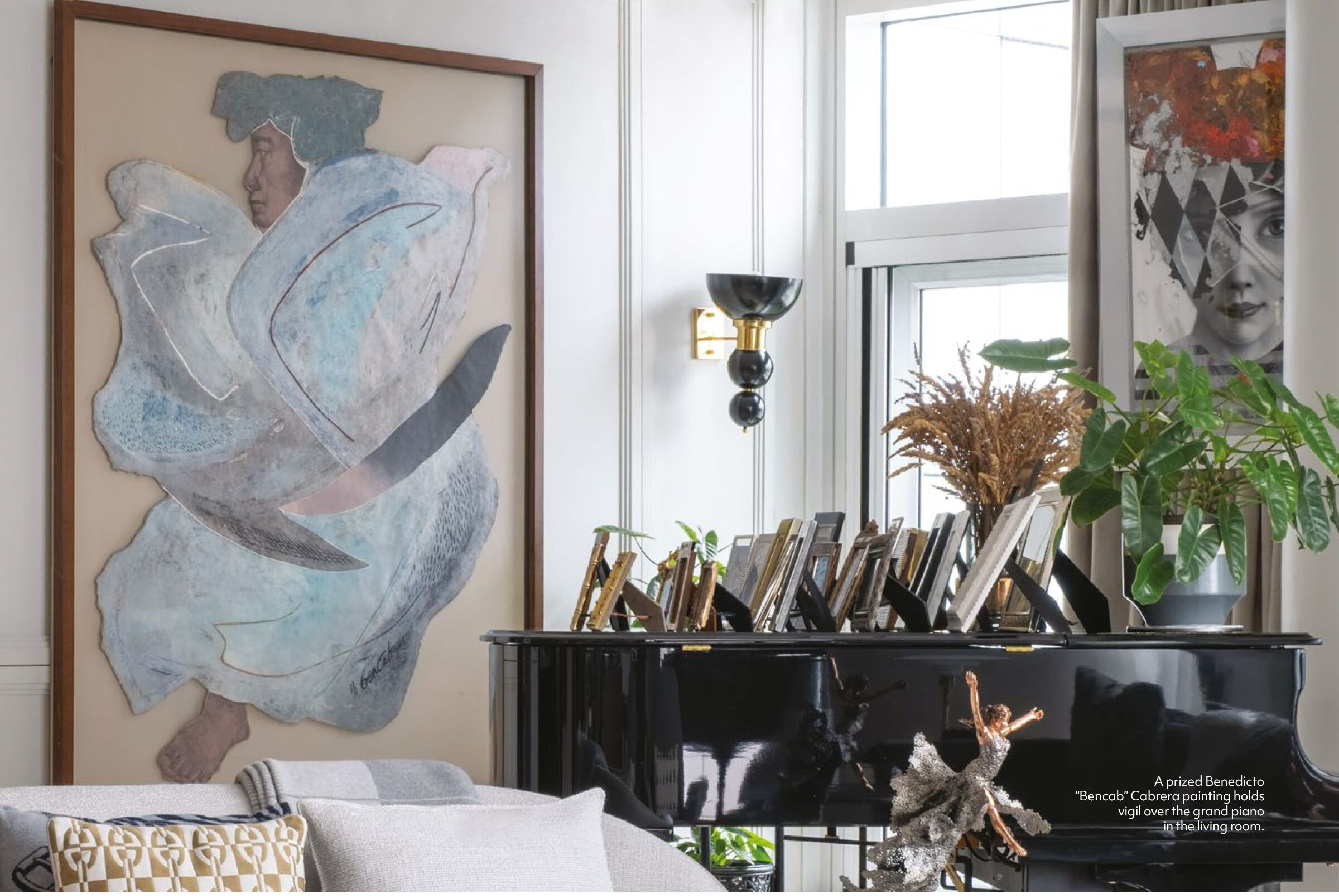
A Collection Complete

After years of pursuit, he now finds himself in a place of quiet satisfaction. The urgency of acquisition has faded, replaced by the contentment of presence. He has gathered many of the works he once dreamed of, and while he remains open to discovery, his focus has shifted to the pleasures of living with what he already has. Unless, he jokes, more wall space suddenly becomes available.

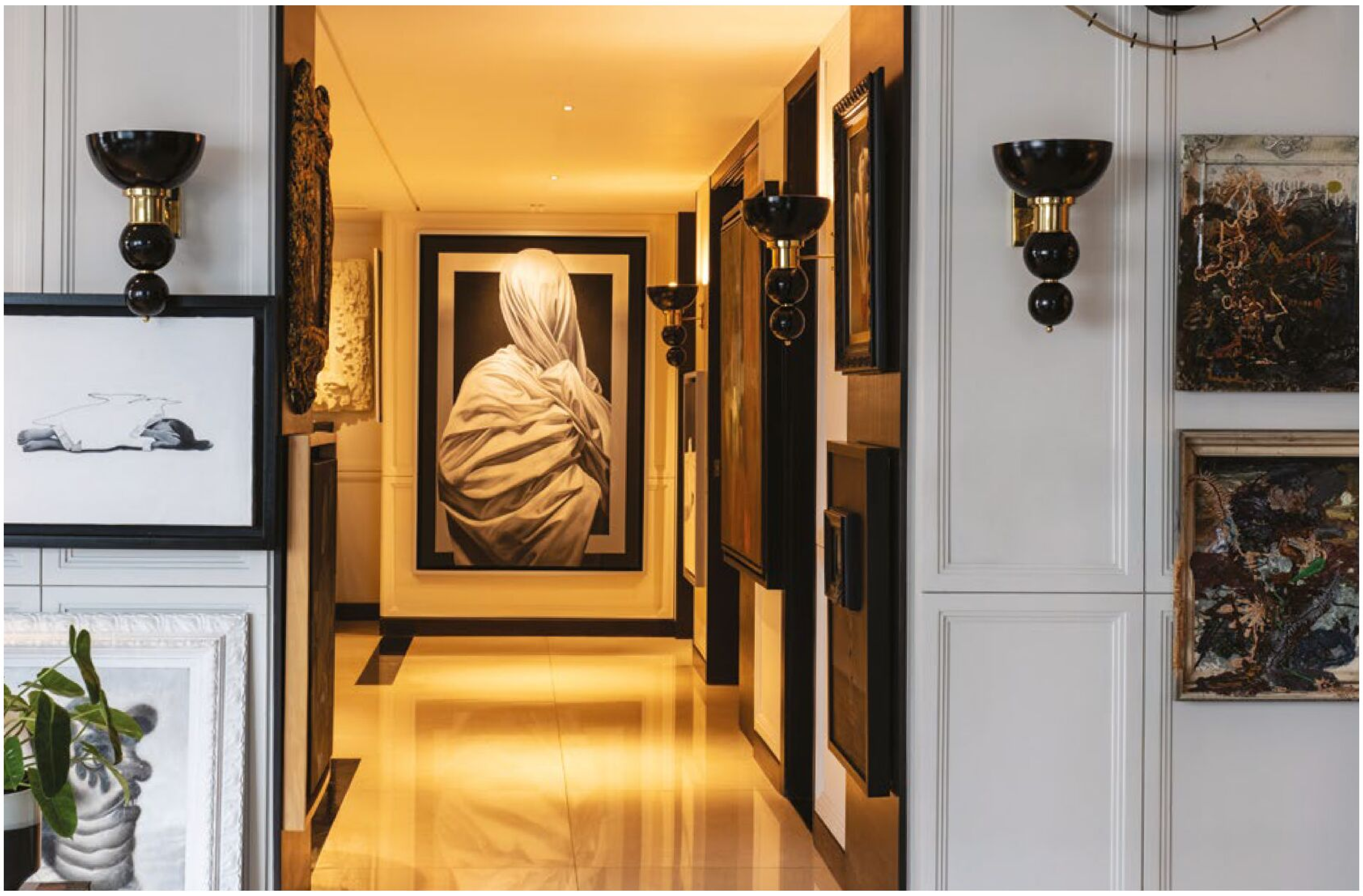
The collection he has built reflects both heritage and discovery, a balance of Philippine masters and contemporary artists who capture the pulse of the present. It is a collection not of trophies but of companions, each piece carrying meaning beyond its price or fame.

To him, art is not about ownership but about life. It is ritual, memory, and rhythm. It is a quiet joy at the end of the day, a reminder of milestones, and a dialogue with both past and future. In his Makati home, art does not hang in stillness but lives, shaping not only the space it inhabits but also the man who surrounds himself with it.

The angular form of a Jinggoy Buensuceso sculpture forms a curated vignette against a graphic canvas.



A prized Benedicto "Bencab" Cabrera painting holds vigil over the grand piano in the living room.



Through the central corridor, the home's collection unfolds, creating a powerful axis that leads the eye past numerous works to a compelling piece that anchors the entire vista.

The figurative mastery of BenCab contrasts beautifully with a mix of the surreal, the abstract, and the sculptural.

WRITTEN BY ELLE YAP PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

Curators of Culture

BluPrint interviews three galleries with reputations built upon decades of existence and excellence, discussing their perspectives on the art community and its evolution.

Tina Fernandez, art collector and founder of Artinformal, first created the institution as an educational hub between artists and people to help educate them on different mediums and art forms before evolving into an art gallery.

True authority cannot be claimed—it must be built. It is the result of years serving a community, applying expertise, and meeting the culture where it stands. For in the end, it is simply a function of trust, earned over time through patience and effort.

These three galleries—each with more than a decade under their belt—use their authority to uplift newer artists and secure the legacy of established ones. They do not focus on trends or profitability; rather, their survival and authority comes from a deep knowledge of artistry that only years of work and history with the art community can provide.

Their longevity within the ever-changing art landscape has allowed them to guide our local cultural conversations. Their age has made them stewards of the past, allowing future generations of Filipino artists and art lovers a look at how the landscape has changed within their time.

Finding Their Footing as Galleries

Different reasons for starting a gallery have emerged, but an interesting throughline for these three galleries is that, for many of them, their artist-centric approach was what lended them the credibility they needed to establish themselves. The trust came because their founders were already focused on the artist and their communities; their evolution into galleries was just the next step in that broader goal.

Artinformal at Karrivin Plaza, Makati City, did not start as a gallery at all, but as an art workshop. Founder Tina Fernandez started it in 2004 mostly to allow artists to teach interested people art. It became an art gallery in 2006 because the people being taught were guided into either making art or buying the works of their teachers.

“Education led to understanding, which led to appreciating and eventually buying art,” she said. “This thrust of education and engaging the viewer still continues up to today.”

This guided the curatorial decisions of the gallery to this day. Fernandez said that her approach differed from commercial galleries because she sought a broader variety of exhibitions. She sought new ideas to showcase, and never pressured artists to conform to the trends of today.

MO_Space, located in Bonifacio High Street in Taguig, was founded by Mawen Ong in 2007 as an artist-run space that was taking advantage of the then-emerging economic hub of Bonifacio Global City. She already had relationships with artists, and the plan was to showcase what was happening in Cubao X at the time at a different location. Originally planned for three years, MO_Space has been running strong for eighteen

Artinformal focuses on the kind of contemporary paintings that showcase the world, in all its beauty and ugliness.

The rooms at Artinformal allow for an easy ebb and flow of artistic ideas, one that belies the educational core and beginning of the gallery.

and counting.

"The shows we used to present in the past were more challenging in all aspects (physically and mentally) and harder to appreciate by the ordinary person looking for pretty art works," Ong said. "You can say the shows were more on the risky side; but then, this was the mid 2000s, everyone was young and ideas were all possible. Exciting times, but challenging to be acquired.

"But then the same artists we used to show then are essentially the same brilliant people [now], but they have also refined their ideas after years of distilling them."

Silverlens at Chino Roces, Makati City, was founded by Isa Lorenzo in 2004 before she was joined by her co-director Rachel Rillo in 2007. Starting out as a photography gallery, it has expanded into artists of multiple mediums and ideas, committed to showing contemporary art within the Philippine, Asian, and international art landscape.

Their exhibitions have varied over the years, ranging from traditional paintings to tactile mixes of sculpture and canvas, to more experimental artforms like video, virtual reality, and sound art. That variety serves them well, allowing them to be at the forefront of Filipino contemporary art conversations more than most galleries in the country. Rillo believes that their gallery nurtures a sense of authenticity from their artists that people respond to.

"Authenticity is, I think, the core of what we believe in," she said. "And I think if you find those artists or those weights of the scene and that language, I think you will find your audience as well, because it's authentic and it's not, let's say, fashionable for the time."

Nurturing Talent and Artistic Instinct

As these three galleries endured over the decades, their directors found a strong pattern of ideas not just to sustain their gallery business, but to make it flourish. A big part of this is that they took the time to look after their stable of artists—whether emerging or established—to ensure that they feel safe to follow their muses

Mawen Ong believes that MO_Space grew with many of the artists vetted carefully allowing them to have a connective tissue with the gallery that showcased the evolution of their art.

Mo's Space's Revisiting The Landscape, featuring Poklong Anading, Pope Bacay, Jan Balquin, Mariano Ching, Roberto Chabet, Lesley-Anne Cao, Cian Dayrit, Celine Lee, Lui Medina, Veronica Peralejo, Issay Rodriguez, Isabel Santos, The Weather Bureau, Derek Tumala, Miguel Lorenzo Uy, MM Yu, and Eric Zamuco.

The 17 Filipino artists reimagined the landscape genre through picture, text, history, place, and event—expanding its meaning in contemporary art.

regardless of where it leads them. "They say that it takes a village to raise a child; in our case, I personally believe it takes an art community to raise an artist," Ong said. "The galleries in the eco system have all provided and continue to provide opportunities for an artist's growth. By hosting the show, installing it, promoting it, inviting audiences, the artists see their concepts become a tangible reality, and dialogue happens."

"A gallery's relationship with an artist isn't static, it evolves as the artist matures," Fernandez said. "We recognize these shifts and adapt accordingly. In the debut phase, the gallery's role is an incubator and advocate. We introduce the artist's work to collectors and curators. Exhibitions are a platform of legitimacy. [...] We take a chance on untested voices, absorbing financial and reputational risk."

Ong sees her relationship with the artists as almost-familial, in a sense. Her approach in helping these artists is to provide them what they need to allow an idea to flourish, whether it's a sounding board to bounce ideas off of, or people who will tell them the truth on whether an exhibition needs more work or not.

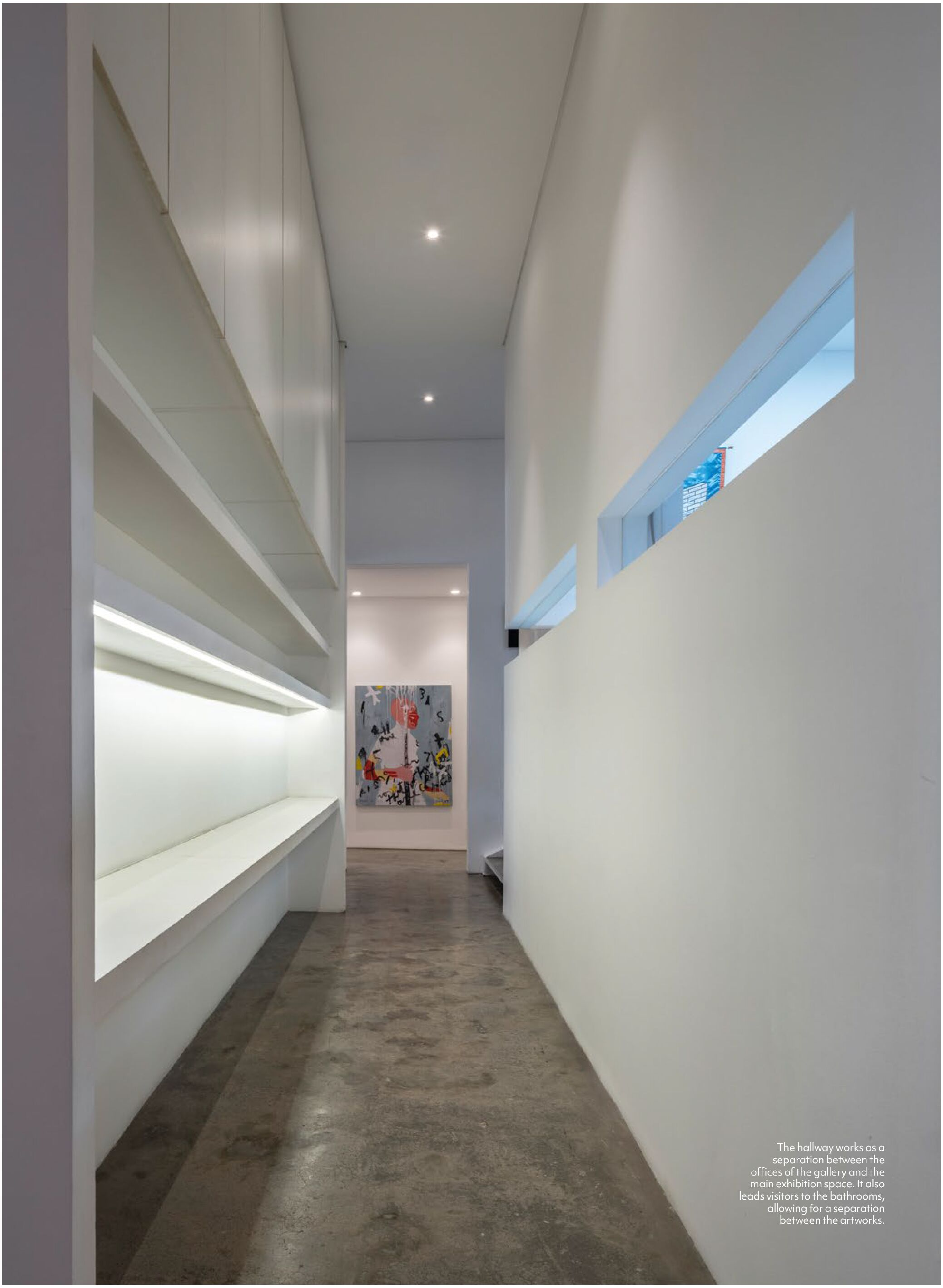
Galleries, for her, represent the artist's ideas in the best way possible; they don't dictate what an artist must or mustn't do. "I don't think we have really guided any careers, we just grew up along with everyone," she said. "Like a family we sound off plans and directions with close artist friends, and likewise they tell us about their plans, and ideas. We share opinions, honest ones. It's all very holistic and natural."

Rillo, meanwhile, sees the role of the gallery as the people who can advocate for the artistic instincts of an artist. The gallery's job for the artists that they represent, she said, is not just to show art, but to encourage the artists to pursue their ideas and to give them confidence in the material they're creating and working on. "Our job as [a] gallery is also to tell [the artist], 'you know, this is good stuff, this has a place in the rest of the art world,'" Rillo said. "So it's both ways: we're not just telling an audience to think 'this stuff is good,' we're also telling the artist 'wait, this is really good, we can bring it out and do all sorts of stuff.'"

However a gallery director approaches their work, one thing is certain: it's necessary for them to cultivate that trust between artist and gallery to make everything work. The more an artist trusts an institution behind them, the more they can develop into making more honest and personal artworks that they wouldn't otherwise be able to create. ■

Rachel Rillo is one of the gallery directors of Silverlens. One of her achievements as co-head of Silverlens is her expansion of the documentation of the artists signed to the gallery.

Silverlens Gallery's current Manila location was built in a former food commissary. Designed by architect Anna Sy, the space was made to be a counter to the cramped urban world around it: roomy and expansive for the possibilities of existence.



The hallway works as a separation between the offices of the gallery and the main exhibition space. It also leads visitors to the bathrooms, allowing for a separation between the artworks.

Geraldine Javier's 'The Two Fridas' and Citra Sasmita's works in the background highlight Silverlens' ambitions towards bridging Philippine art towards the international art scene, finding commonalities in the practices of artists between countries.

Yasue Maetake's 'Ceremonial Delta II' embodies the artistic practice of the artist, one that reduces materials to their core elements, showing the pliability of physical matter while challenging our views of what sculptural means.

WRITTEN BY ELLE YAP PHOTOGRAPHED BY EXCEL PANLAQUE AND ED SIMON

Voices From the Underground

Three artist-run galleries are on a mission to showcase the country's new and up-and-coming artists

KalawakanSpacetime
Online Catalogues

Gabriel Naguiat and Jan Sunday, the directors of Kalawakan Spacetime, are both artists that come from two underground scenes: Sunday is from the hardcore punk scene while Naguiat does graffiti.

The image of the fiercely independent artist often clashes with the practical realities of the art world. While we culturally value works that push boundaries and question our perspectives, an artist's visibility and creative freedom are frequently linked to their work's popularity.

This dynamic places many artists in a challenging position. A deeply personal vision—the very source of their unique voice—may not always align with broader market tastes or trends. The core struggle for many creators, therefore, is navigating the space between their artistic integrity and the practical necessity of building a career that allows them to continue making their work.

The importance of artist-run spaces spring into mind. Because they value the artist first before commerce or profit, these become a safe place to test new ideas, work through personal concepts, or just create something that doesn't necessarily cater to a mainstream audience. Artist-run galleries focus more on the feeling of the matter, rather than its importance in art history or profitability. It's what makes them so essential in our art ecosystem today.

BluPrint takes a look at three different galleries that continually challenge the status quo of art. They look beyond market trends and seek art that personally resonates, providing safe spaces for ambitious, boundary-pushing art, regardless of public acceptance.

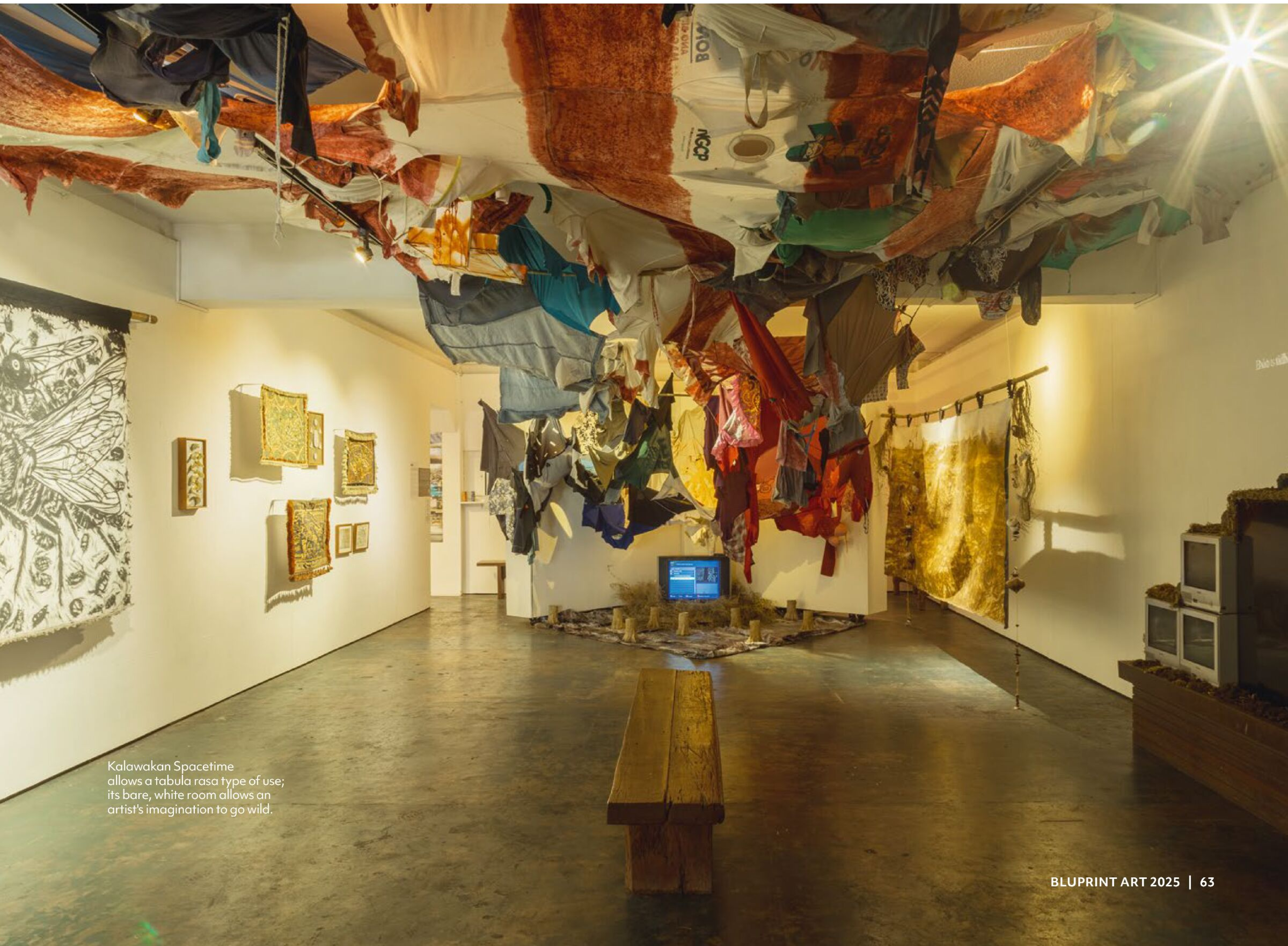
Cultivating the Underground

Kalawakan Spacetime at the Casa Bella Building in Quezon City, was founded in 2017 by Jan Sunday and Gabriel Naguiat. A gallery that has its ear to the underground by design, Naguiat originally created Kalawakan as a venue for showing underground subcultures in a gallery context. Many who show here are not necessarily artists-by-trade; just people who want to say something about the world at large.

"Before I opened the space, I was hanging out with a lot of my [artist friends] who were in the gallery circuit," he said. "They were doing shows regularly, and then I was also hanging out with people in the graffiti scene, [and] in the skateboard scene.

"I guess there wasn't a specific conversation, but several conversations where I picked up some of their concerns and their complaints about what was happening in the gallery scene, sticking mental notes about it. And then I also realized that a lot of the art that's coming out from the underground

Artist-run spaces provides the kind of freedom within their space for experimentation, platforming multi-modal thinking that goes beyond typical ideas.



Kalawakan Spacetime allows a tabula rasa type of use; its bare, white room allows an artist's imagination to go wild.

wasn't being shown in the gallery context and I thought that would be interesting to show because I think there [were] overlapping narratives [with the establishment] that would be nice to showcase."

They are well-known for their different exhibits focusing on marginalized people and undersung subcultures, made for and by people within those communities. This year, in fact, a 2024 exhibition of theirs, Uri de Ger's Beauty Is In The Eye of the Colonizer, won the Fernando Zóbel Prize for Visual Art.

Both Naguiat and Sunday come from different underground scenes: Sunday is an artist with roots to the hardcore punk scene while Naguiat was in the graffiti scene. With Kalawakan, both of them aspire to give support to different scenes and communities.

"I think being part of the community helps," Sunday said. "Being part of the music scene, being part of communities that support mutual aid, being part of communities that are in subcultures. I think there's a certain 'if you know, you know' type of thing. And then when they see you, there's an unspoken support right away. I think we really felt the support throughout the years grow with the different communities meeting here. Nagkakakilalala sila."

A Stable Community to Lean On

For MONO8 Gallery in BLK 113 at San Juan City, founder and gallery director Gwen Bautista's focus differed. A former art journalist, she had opened MONO8 as a way of creating a venue that goes beyond showing art; rather, it fosters discussions on art and culture, from the art community and the visiting public that goes their way.

"The goal for us here is to be able to support them in realizing the full potential of their practice, or at least helping the process of developing their practice and their potential," Bautista said. "So we help them develop their exhibitions by also presenting their works in public programs and work[ing] together with descriptions and form some publications in the process."

MONO8, unlike Kalawakan, does cater exclusively to artists. Bautista said that their focus is on emerging and mid-career artists, with the latter being people that Bautista have known as far back as when she was getting her Fine Arts degree in the University of the Philippines.

Regardless of whether it's an artist that's starting out and needs help creating their exhibits, or established artists who want to expand beyond what they're known for, Bautista ensures that they get the support they need in order to achieve their goals.

"We foster a certain type of relationship where we value each other, not just for the necessary things or career type of things, bvut also on a personal level," she said. "I am very proud to say that many of the artists who exhibit here actually have relationships with each other as well. We build actual friendships, we build actual communities; you know, people see each other very often and help each other with it."

This kind of community-building here is so ripe for MONO8 that the gallery itself has garnered a reputation for two-person exhibitions, like their 2024 collaborative exhibit between painter Clarence Chun and Luis Lorenzana. Bautista said these come either from her suggestion or because the two artists meet in a MONO8 exhibit opening and find themselves liking each other's vibe.

"These [exhibitions tend to be] artists that I have separately worked with in the past whom I feel like they would be able to have a good collaboration together," she said. "We've had very successful exhibitions with this type of format, and also, I'm very happy because they

Gwen Bautista, the founder and gallery director of MONO8, previously worked as an art journalist and hoped that she could transfer in the Philippines.

As with any gallery, staging is as important as anything in sending messages of intent with the audience; for artist-run spaces where there might not be a lot of room, it necessitates inventive spacing to send intent forward.

The artworks by Pepe Delfin has a transfixing quality to it, almost ephemeral in the way it plays with perspective to suggest larger, more hypnotizing images that exists beyond the canvas.

The way the room partitions suggests different moods dependent on the exhibition: the red walls contrast with the swirling, mixed-paint nature of the art, while the white walls in the other exhibit compliment the darker primary colors of the other exhibit.

Indy Paredes and Melai Matias conceptualized Gravity Art Space as the people who were buying Paredes' art were asking for recommendations for other artists.

also foster their own personal friendships."

A Place for Learning

With Gravity Art Space, co-founders Indy Paredes and Melai Matias don't necessarily have a specific focus on the type of artist that they show. Their gallery, which opened in 2021 and located in Mother Ignacia Avenue in Quezon City, caters to artists of all persuasions, whether in painting, sculpture, video, or even mixed-media.

For Paredes, who does the programming of the exhibitions shown at Gravity Art Space, the stature of an artist does not matter as much. If the gallery can work together with them easily and they can submit their works on the timeline they committed, then they can exhibit in the gallery.

"Kapag nakita namin na madaling katrabaho, masayang katrabaho, at tsaka magaan, yun' yung time rin na nag-e-enjoy din yung gallery to work with them," he said. ("When we see that they're easy and happy to work with, that's when we know that we'll enjoy working with them.")

In fact, Paredes thinks that mixing the established artists with the emerging artists together teaches those emerging artists a lot more than if they were segregated. Gravity Art Space usually does up to six exhibitions each month, giving different artists opportunities to get to know each other during openings, talks, and other events within the space. He harkened back to his own experiences as an artist, saying that he learned a lot of lessons and met a lot of people just by being exhibited side-by-side with elder artists.

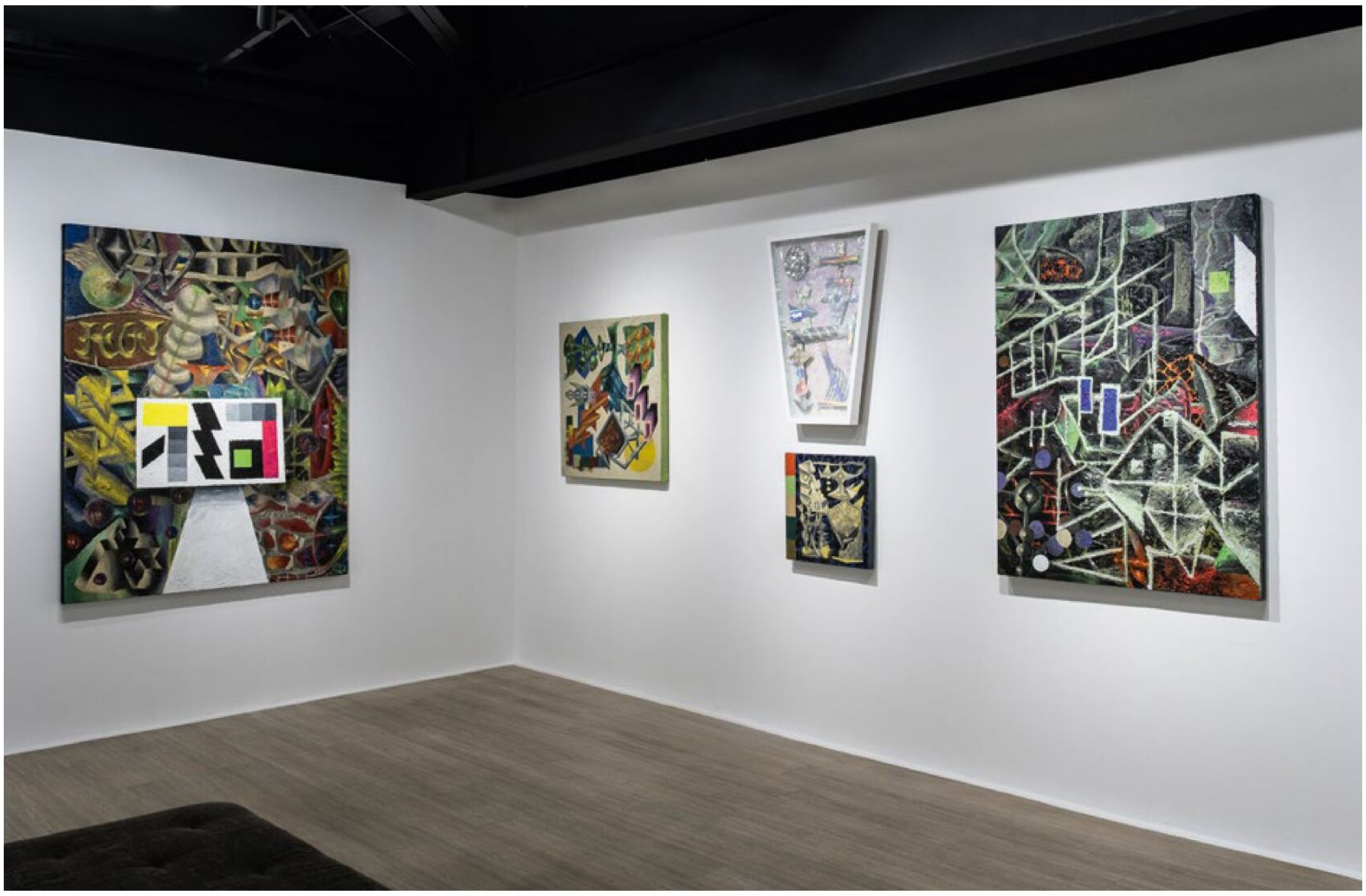
"Malaking bagay kasi noong bata rin ako at nagsisimula na artist, gustong-gusto rin na nasasabay ako with established artists," he revealed. "Pag kasabay ko sila, marami rin akong makikilala: yung bisita nila, kaibigan nila. Marami akong natututunan: sa ingress pa lang, makasabay sila; 'pag nag-open na, yung crowd nila, makikilala mo. Gusto ko mapa-feel iyon, lalo na yung ka-batch ko ngayon, established na. Tapos yung mga parating na mga artists, na emerging, marami silang matututunan doon sa mga makakasabay nila."

("When I was an emerging artist, I really liked when I was shown alongside established artists. When that happens, I meet a lot of people: their visitors, their friends. I learned a lot: from ingress, I'm there with them; when it opens, I get to meet their crowd. I want the emerging artists of today to feel that, especially since my batch are established today.")

Bringing Art to the Masses

At the end of it all, however, these galleries, regardless of the challenges of our world, see art's importance well enough that they are willing to do the extra work to help it be shown in new venues. They take their roles as platforms very seriously, and see it as a higher calling to elevate Filipino art to the next level. And in the process, these rising independent, artist-run galleries also reckon with the system they work with. At the end of the day, maybe some of these artists, some of these subcultures, find success in the mainstream. Maybe not. But what's more important for them is that the artists were able to say what they needed to say and build healthier communities away from the toxic environments that they grew up in.

"I heard someone say, 'sometimes structures are built by fascists, but you don't exactly need to tear them down because buildings are structures but the people inside them make the ideology,'" Bautista shared. "A space is just a space, but the programming that runs the space, and the people that runs the space, what they want to do, their perspectives and the context of what it is that they do: that's what makes a platform." ▤



The gallery showcases works with experimental nature that appears even in the non-traditional way that the canvas are cut. It suggests larger possibilities that may come from the playful, graffiti-like use of linework and colors in the paintings.

Gravity Art Space has a large, unique layout that allows for multiple exhibits to coexist within a single space.

WRITTEN BY ANJELIKA ORUI PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

Where Art Meets Island

How Lubi's collaborative art program is cultivating a new model for creative practice

There's a moment when you first encounter art at Lubi where something fundamental shifts. You realize you're not looking at artworks positioned on the landscape but you're walking through art that has grown from it.

Nine contemporary installations scattered across this former plantation don't sit on land like objects on a table. They emerge from it, woven into the place with such seamlessness that the boundary between natural and constructed begins to dissolve.

This is art that remembers what galleries often forget: that we experience the world through more than just our eyes. Here, creative work engages every sense: touch, hearing, smell, and those unnamed sensations that exist beyond the conventional five. It's a return to visceral memory, that powerful force that can transport us through time with a single trigger.

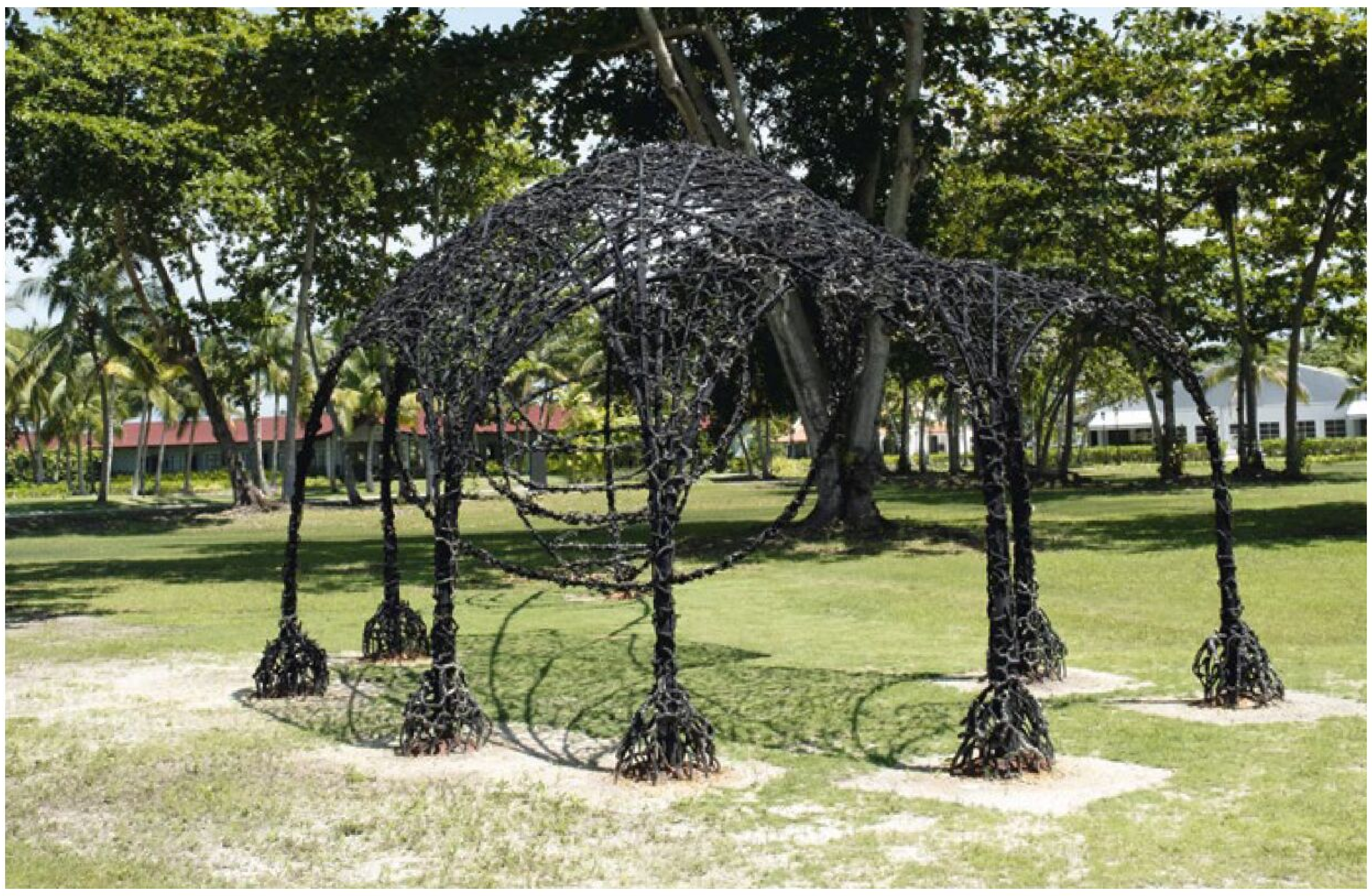
Corinne de San Jose understands this intimately in her sound installation "417." A spiral of bamboo aeolian flutes, each tuned to frequencies believed to facilitate change and cleanse disruption, plays only when the wind decides. By eliminating visual access to the landscape everyone came to see, she redirects attention to what's usually ignored: sound, breath, the feeling of standing still. You enter, walk the crushed coral path, and wait. It's a meditation on receptivity and the practice of simply listening.

Art at Lubi functions as a kind of teleportation device. It moves people not through space but through layers of experience, memory, and feeling.

The methodology behind this transformation is quietly radical. Artists are required to work exclusively with materials the island offers: driftwood, bamboo, whatever debris washes ashore. But more significantly, they must collaborate with the people who call this place home.

On Kopiat Island, Corinne de San Jose's 417 creates a unique soundscape with bamboo walls housing hundreds of Aeolian flutes tuned in relation to the 417hz frequency, transforming the sea breeze into a dissonant, contemplative melody.

Bernardo Pacquing's Earth Mound, a dome crafted from salvaged driftwood, is a study in monumental structure and poetic decay, designed to be reclaimed by nature over time.



Once a threat to marine life, recovered ghost nets are given new form in Poklong Anading's recruit (no. 4).

How often do our attempts to protect become the thing that harms? Working with the Davao Gulf Divers, Poklong Anading witnessed firsthand how well-intentioned protection became harm, how barriers designed for care became agents of damage. His installation "recruit no.4" is a site for reflection on how protection and damage can be disturbingly intertwined.

It acknowledges a truth contemporary practice tends to overlook: that local communities understand their own ecosystems better than any outside expert, including unintended costs of well-meaning solutions. A stranger attempting to fix someone else's home makes little sense, whether that home is physical, cultural, or creative. Yet this basic principle, obvious as it seems, gets overlooked more often than it should.

On Impermanence

These works aren't meant to last forever, and that's not a compromise—it's the point. Like the island's natural cycles, the installations acknowledge temporality as integral to meaning. They weather, transform, eventually return to the environment that birthed them.

Bernardo Pacquing's ″Earth Mound″ transforms slowly, its driftwood structure teaching visitors that deterioration can be as beautiful as construction, a lesson seven years in the making. To witness it now is to understand how nature gradually reclaims control, much like the island's natural cycles.

This acceptance of change reflects a deeper understanding about how culture survives not by building monuments but by creating lineages, not by permanence but through transmission.

We see this urgency playing out globally, traditional craftsmanship facing extinction as master artisans pass away without successors, to indigenous techniques vanishing when communities are displaced.

Lubi suggests an alternative model. By requiring collaboration between visiting artists and local craftspeople, the program creates space for genuine exchange of knowledge and techniques preserved through practice rather than documentation.

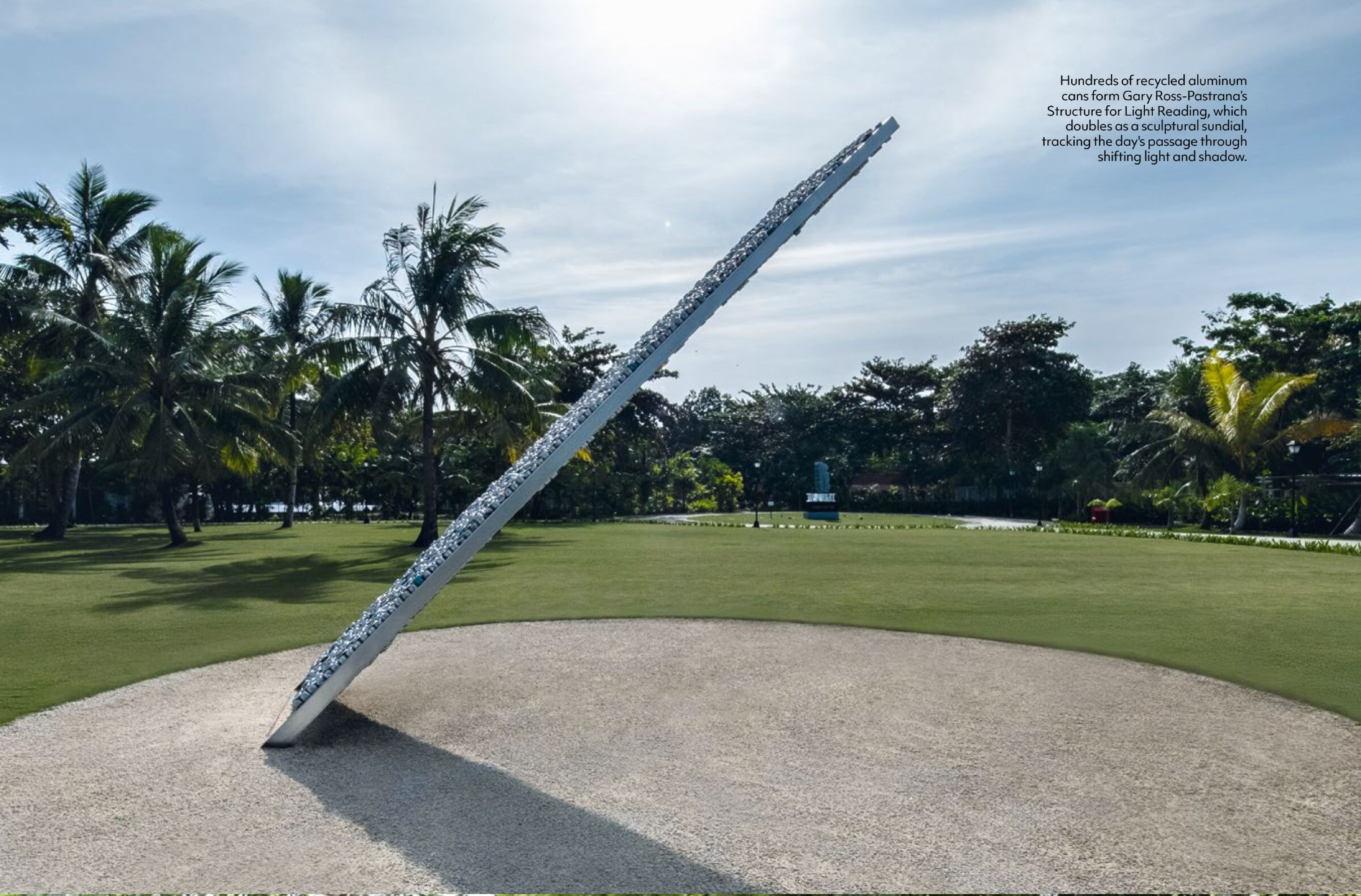
Isabel and Alfredo Aquizilan spent years working alongside artisans and craftsmen in Laguna to revitalize local cultural practices. ″How long after sunset until it gets dark?"—a question that itself invites the kind of patient observation that real collaboration requires—becomes a meditation on time itself. Not clock time, but the deeper rhythms of how light fades and darkness arrives. It's a transition space of observing nature and becoming a part of it.

Embracing temporality as integral to meaning, Lubi Art's installations mirror nature.

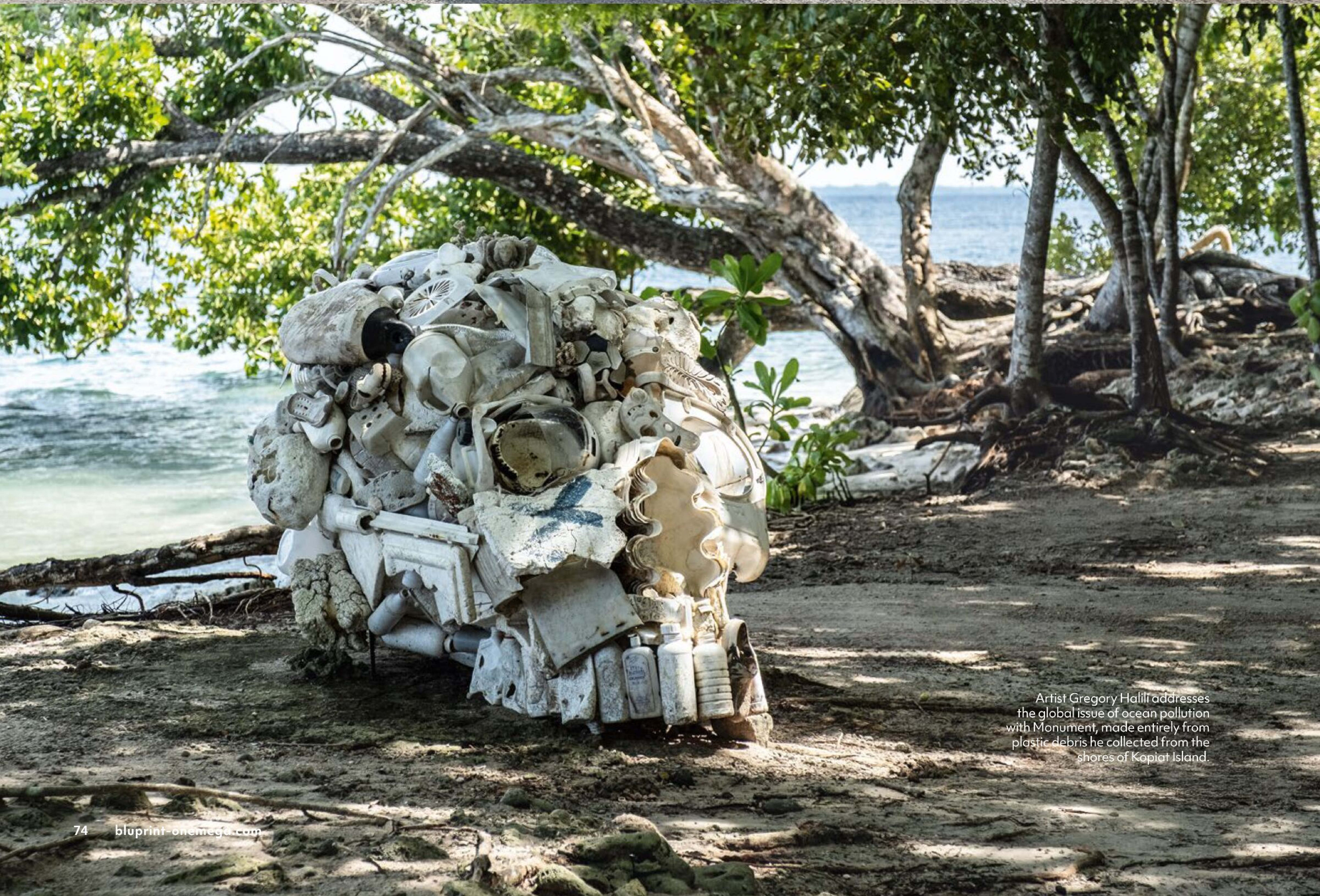
A Contemporary Biennale

Temporary, catalytic, designed to spark imagination rather than provide definitive answers, the art at Lubi operates indirectly, playing with shapes, colors, textures to translate meaning while leaving interpretation entirely open. Gary-Ross Pastrana's ″Structure for Light Reading″ transforms hundreds of aluminum beverage cans, collected from the resort and sorted by women from the nearby community into a sculptural sundial. While ancient civilizations built sundials from stone and bronze for permanence, Pastrana built his from aluminum cans

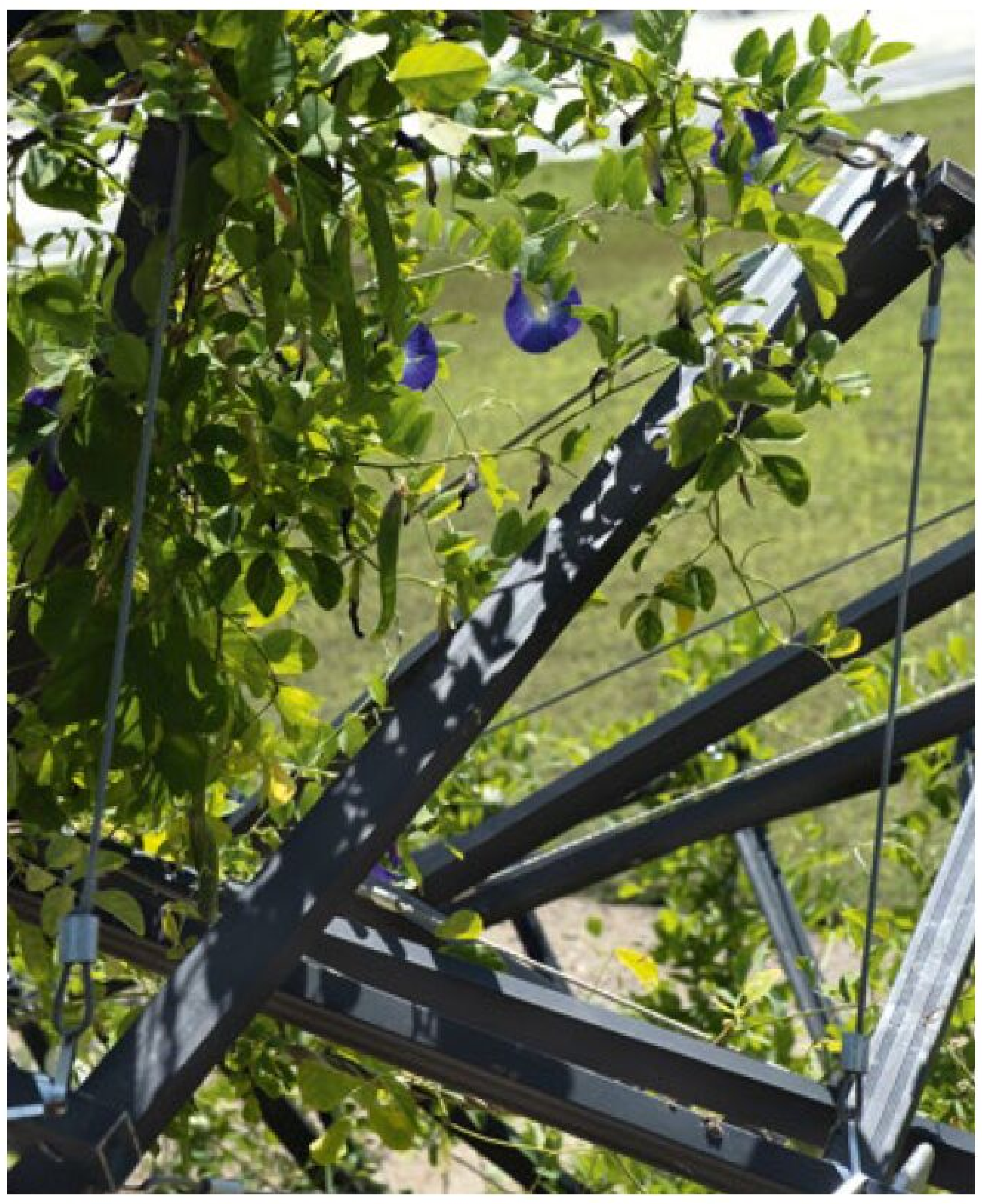
How long after sunset until it gets dark? by Isabel & Alfredo Aquilizan + The Fruitjuice Factori Studio comprises a boat-shaped structure and viewing decks made from salvaged materials invites visitors to reflect on nature's resilience and power.



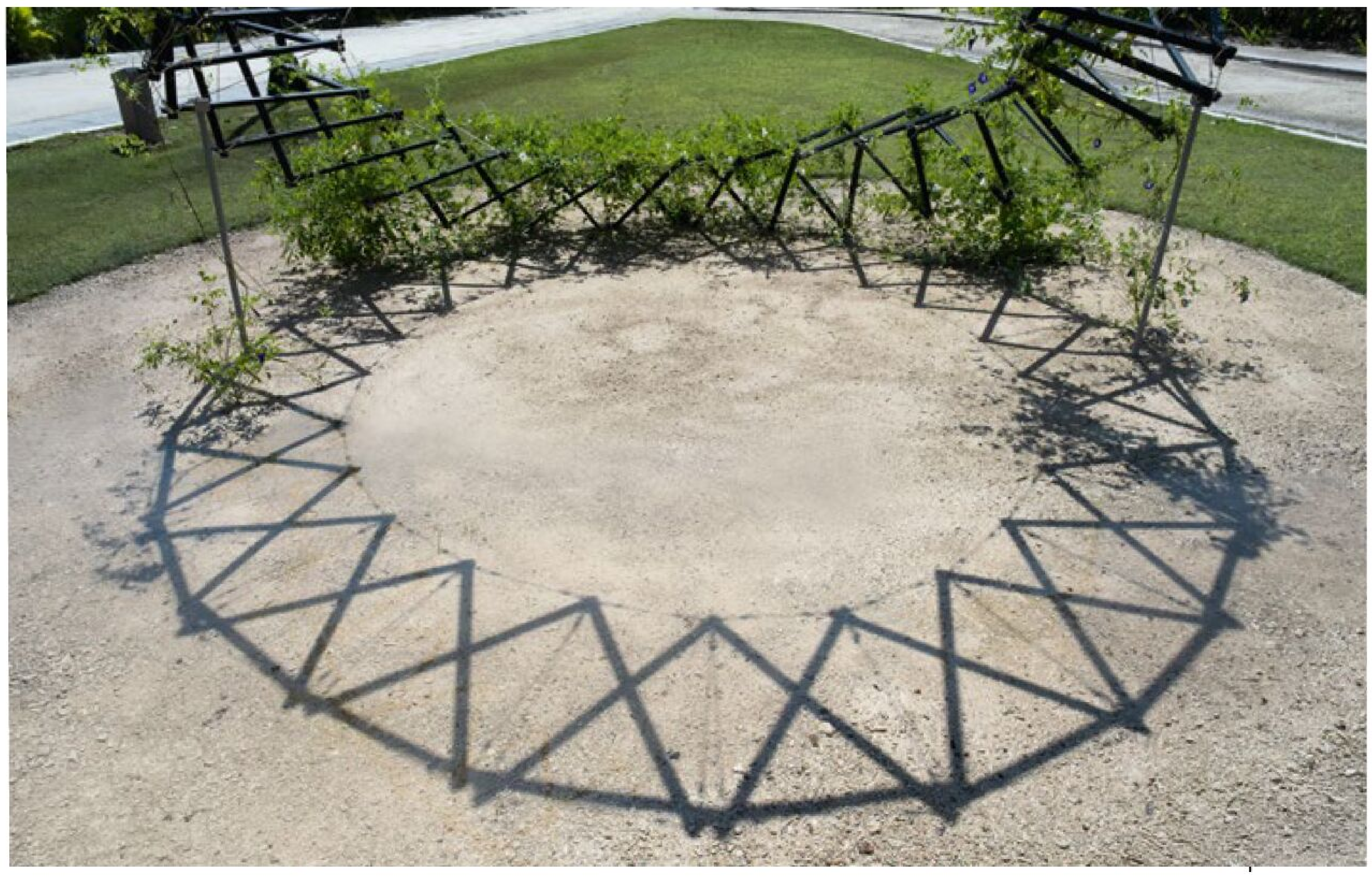
Hundreds of recycled aluminum cans form Gary Ross-Pastrana's Structure for Light Reading, which doubles as a sculptural sundial, tracking the day's passage through shifting light and shadow.



Artist Gregory Halili addresses the global issue of ocean pollution with Monument, made entirely from plastic debris he collected from the shores of Kopiat Island.



Scrap metal from the resort's construction is repurposed into a structural halo for local vegetation.



James Clar's Lesser Speeds creates a symbiosis between industrial and natural.

consumed and discarded within minutes. The question isn't whether artists successfully delivered their intended message. The purpose is purely to let imagination run free, to create conditions where new possibilities become visible.

Perhaps what makes materials disposable or meaningful isn't inherent to the materials themselves, but determined by the attention and labor we're willing to give them, whether we see waste or potential for transformation.

Christina Quisumbing Ramilo's "Builder" gives new life to cement mixers, industrial objects rendered unfamiliar by their vertical arrangement. The yellow tower bears its dents and scars openly, transforming construction equipment into something that speaks about the human impulse to create even when conditions resist.

James Clar's "Lesser Speeds" reveals something profound about how we understand strength itself. Using construction remnants, the work embodies symbiotic design, a radical idea of dependence as a foundation of lasting strength. Here, metal doesn't dominate nature or vice versa. They create something neither could achieve alone. It's a meditation on how we might live differently, not as separate from the systems around us, but as participants in the endless work of mutual strengthening.

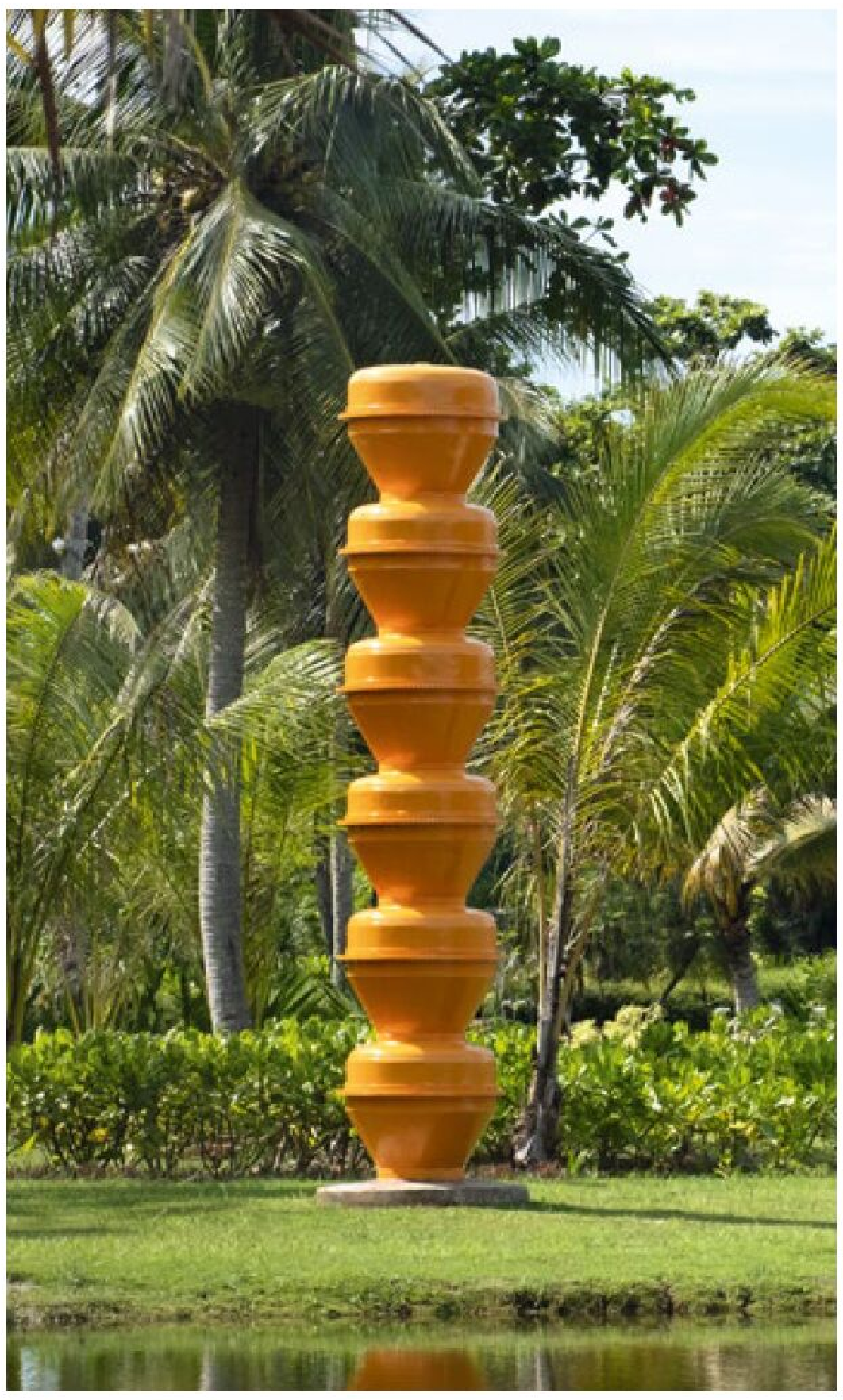
Standing among these works, watching how they negotiate the space between human intention and natural force, something becomes clear: the most meaningful art might be that which doesn't attempt to dominate its context but learns to dance with it.

Gregory Halili, known for his intricate miniatures painted on mother-of-pearl shells, brings an understanding of fragility in "Monument," a structure made of the scraps of daily life. There's a cruel irony in calling it a monument at all. While traditional monuments celebrate what we want to remember, this one confronts us with what we'd rather forget. An artist who spends his career coaxing beauty from the most delicate natural materials now finds himself working with substances designed to outlast everything else on earth.

It raises uncomfortable questions about permanence itself: what deserves to last, what refuses to disappear, and what kind of legacy we're creating in the spaces between intention and consequence.

Wawi Navarroza explores self and surroundings through the lens of tropicality and post-colonial dialogue. Her collaboration with Christina Quisumbing Ramilo on "Everywhere There You Are" speaks to something profound about presence itself. How we can be simultaneously here and elsewhere, rooted and floating, visible and ephemeral?

There's something deeply political about the bright orange fabric claiming space against sea and sky, especially when that orange recalls the color of life jackets - the desperate markers of survival that appear when everything else has failed. The work's fifth iteration suggests art as a recurring dream or a persistent memory, appearing and disappearing like the rhythms it mimics: waves, heartbeats, breathing. By working with the women of Pindasan, the installation becomes more than an aesthetic gesture. It's an acknowledgment



Builder by Christina Quisumbing Ramilo uses cement mixers to create a protrusion of industry amidst nature.

that the most meaningful creative work often emerges from labor that's traditionally invisible, undervalued, but essential to everything else we see.

After

These installations will fade, shift, transform, but what they demonstrate—about what becomes possible when creativity works with rather than against natural systems. About art's capacity to create new forms of shared experience, about what happens when art stops trying to last forever and focuses instead on being fully present, those insights persist.

The island creates a space that changes how people see not just this particular place, but all the places they move through afterward. You leave understanding something new about impermanence and collaboration, about how art can function as both mirror and window, reflecting our relationship with the natural world while opening possibilities for different ways of being within it.

That transformation is subtle, experiential, carried in memory and body. It might represent the most sustainable creative intervention of all: Not a monument but a moment. Not permanence but presence. Art that functions like the best stories: it changes you in ways you only recognize later, when you find yourself seeing the world through different eyes, hearing healing frequencies in unexpected places, noticing the beauty in decay.

Everywhere There You Are by Wawi Navarroza and Christina Quisumbing Ramilo was created with the women of Pindasan that acts as a vibrant welcome banner for visitors to the Island.

WRITTEN BY CARYLL ONG PHOTOGRAPHED BY ED SIMON

Dining to the Nines

This supper club is redefining traditional club concepts, bridging the gap between dining and nightlife

Tucked within the vibrant nightscapes of Uptown BGC, Medusa at The Palace amalgamates dinner and nightlife. The supper club derived its name from the Greek mythological figure, one who evokes fear and fascination. As it embodies its namesake, Medusa transforms myth into an experience-driven space that transcends into and shapes the dining and nightlife experience.

Designed by Pauline and John Sac of 50/53 Architects, Medusa is a stand-alone venue within The Palace Complex that has its own private, checkered-tile driveway and a street-facing façade characterized by five arched entryways. Upon entering the venue, the reception area welcomes guests with a bold entry that sets the tone for the rest of the space.

The black-and-white carpet's motif seamlessly transitions into the table's vertical tilework, shifting from soft fabric to smooth ceramic while retaining the same pattern. As the tiles taper in size toward the top, they subtly guide the eye to the center of the room.

Behind the reception desk, a golden-toned mural depicting a lush jungle scene evokes a mysterious, exotic tone. Framed by ribbed arches washed in amber light, the tableau draws the eye inward, enveloping visitors in a sense of drama and intrigue even before they step into the club proper.

Spatial Rhythm

Arches and vaulted ceilings serve as recurring architectural details that both guide and define the club's spaces. As guests pass through the glass-framed entryway into the welcome bar, the layout then unfolds in layered seating. The journey culminates at the heart of the venue. "We envisioned the journey as a gradual reveal," Pauline Sac states, "That central bar anchors the design, while the more intimate pockets around it give balance and offer different ways to experience the space."

The spatial arrangement resembles a panopticon, with the bar anchoring

From vertical tilework to the golden-toned mural, the reception area boldly welcomes guests by immediately setting a sense of intrigue in its curated artistry.

the entire space, its stools forming the first ring of interaction. Tables seating two to four extend the circle, offering more intimate encounters before giving way to the built-in banquettes that line the walls for larger groups. This concentric arrangement, illuminated by ambient lighting, casts the bar as the stage of social exchange, with every seat drawn into its orbit of connection.

"We wanted an atmosphere where food, socializing, and nightlife could overlap naturally," Sac explains.

Maximalist Materiality

The main area is a blueprint for thoughtful material harmony. "In this project, materiality became the primary means of expressing maximalism," the architect shares. "Each specification played a role in building depth and contrast, demonstrating that maximalism is achieved through the thoughtful accumulation and cohesion of materials rather than excess for its own sake."

She points out that the design philosophy was less about a single dominant finish, but rather the layering of a wide range of materials and finishes; plain velvets are paired with lacquered surfaces; metallic accents were peppered throughout to unify the palette; and bold prints are contrasted with matte textures for balance.

For the seating, the architects utilized a wide set of fabrics, from animal prints to blue argyle patterns. Walls display hand-painted murals of tropical vignettes framed by ornate columns topped with golden leaves. These act as spatial borders, paired with velvet curtains, to form intimate social settings, serving both aesthetic and functional purposes.

The Synca lighting by Endo orchestrates the illumination of the mural on the ceiling. The extensive lighting distribution shifts in color temperature and intensity to mimic natural transitions.

Visual Curation

Each room is given a distinct personality, consisting of its own spatial characteristics. Sac remarks, "We gave each area its own character through material choices and lighting, but kept a consistent palette and rhythm across the space.

An arched glass entryway leads guests from the reception area into the welcome bar.

The velvet curtains bordering the welcome bar open into the main dining area of the supper club.

The maximalist design of the venue is illustrated in the wide array of fabrics utilized in the dining area.

The ceiling displays a mural of a sky, with its warm colors harmonizing with the golden hues of the lights

The curtains slowly unfold the ante room, bringing guests into an entirely new space enveloped in softness.

That way, the rooms feel distinct without breaking the overall flow."

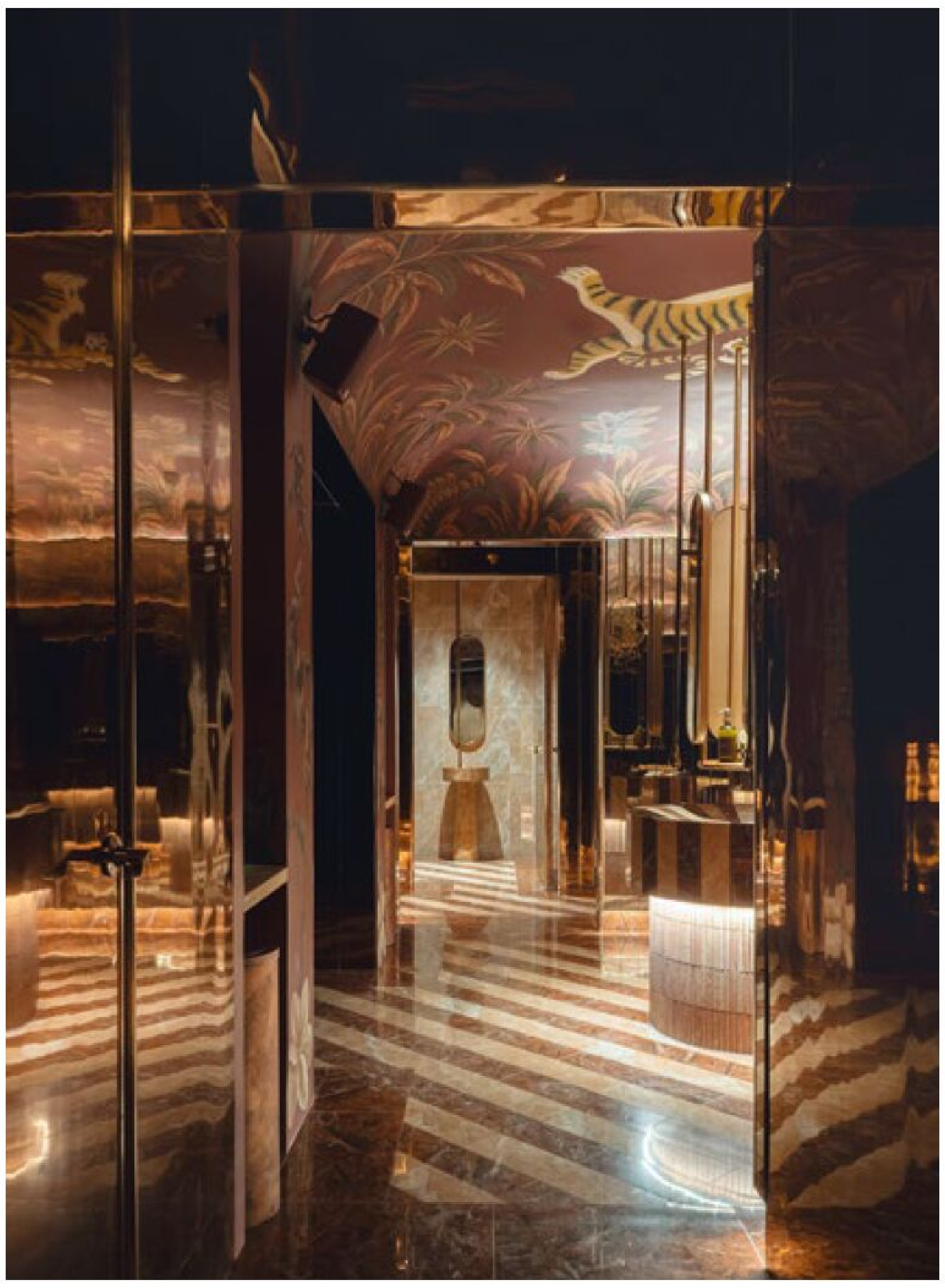
The lounge area unfolds like a cinematic set—wrapped in draped textiles that ripple across walls and ceiling, giving the space an enveloping softness. The palette leans into amber, ochre, and burnished gold, punctuated by glowing lamps and plush ottomans. Its symmetry and layered textures suggest a heightened theatricality, a space that invites hushed conversations against a backdrop of velvet and sheen.

Immediately adjacent is the communal bathroom, which takes on a more decadent, almost fantastical narrative. Highly reflective bronze panels distort and multiply the space, creating an otherworldly sense of immersion. Striped marble flooring leads the eye to a luminous central plinth, while a painted ceiling of oversized flora and fauna introduces a surreal, dreamlike quality. Here, ornament and reflection collaborate to create an atmosphere that's both luxurious and disorienting—an interior as much about spectacle as about gathering.

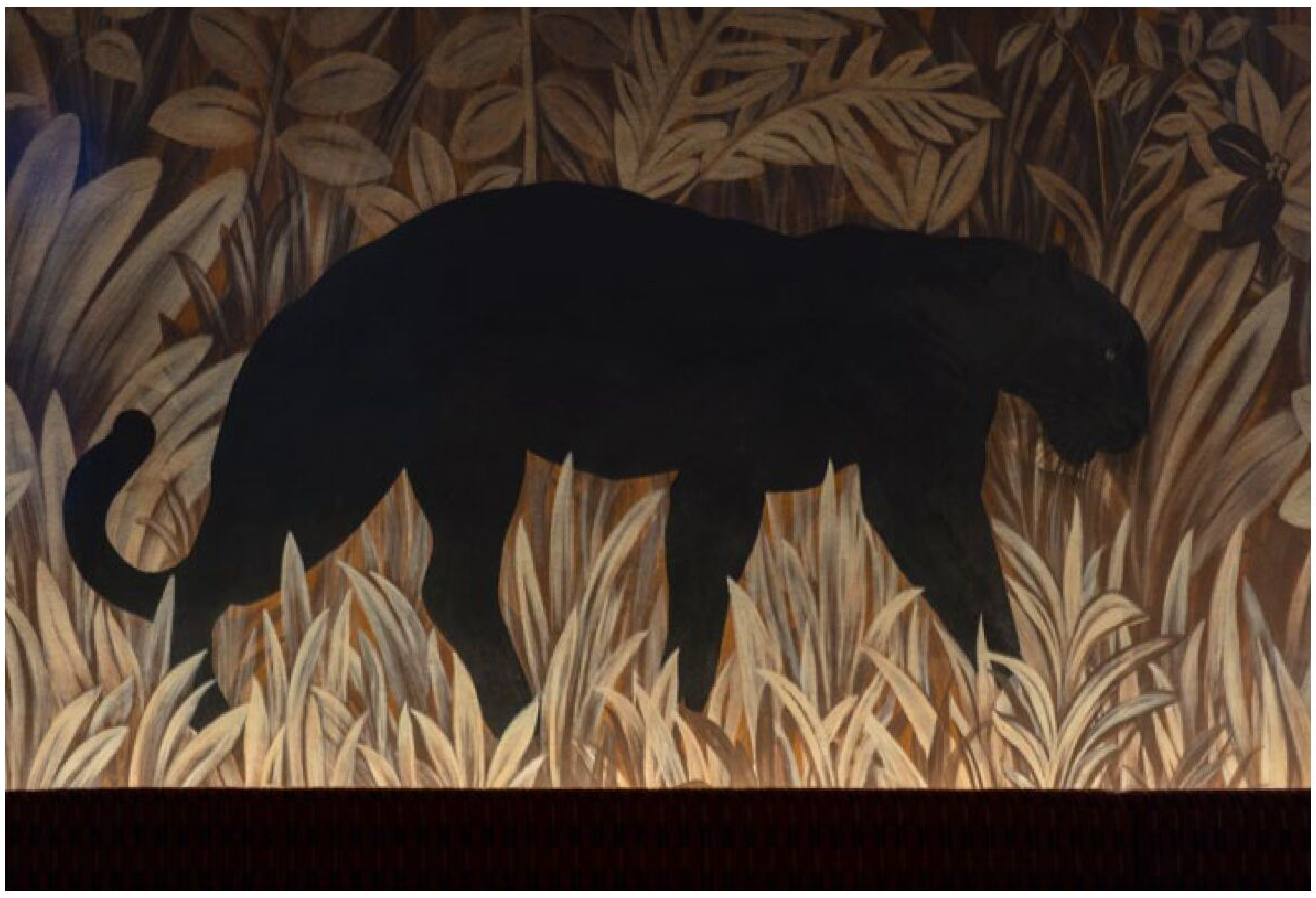
"We wanted an atmosphere where food, socializing, and nightlife could overlap naturally."

The VIP room exudes a sense of drama. Deep green walls are lined with arched columns that curve upward into sculptural gold fixtures, casting a warm, upward glow. Overhead, a ceiling washed in crimson and hand-painted with swirling serpentine forms sets a theatrical counterpoint to the otherwise moody palette.

A long table finished in polished burgundy stretches through the center, softened by patterned runners and flanked by plush mustard-gold seating. Mirrors along one wall extend the perspective, amplifying the glow and rhythm of the arches, making the space feel both enclosed and infinite—an opulent retreat designed as much for spectacle as for seclusion.



Even an auxiliary space like the wash room is decadent in design, converging reflection and ornament to create an immersive experience.

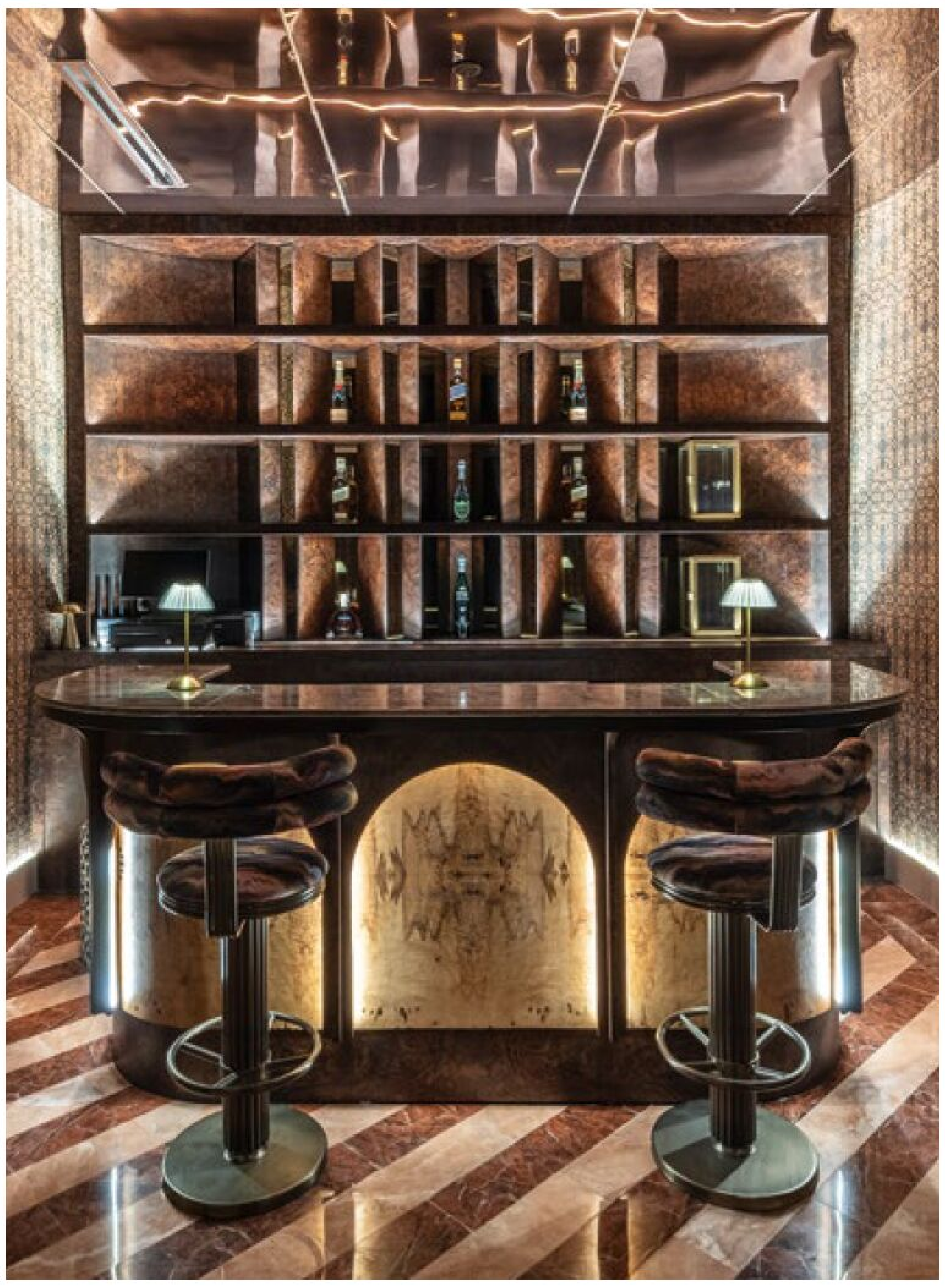


Hand-painted murals of tropical settings are displayed throughout the venue.

Between Dining and Nightlife

The client's brief was simple: create a concept that felt fresh and not just another club. And 50/53 Architects accomplished exactly that. The client trusted their vision for Medusa, giving them the freedom to explore and deliver a venue that is truly unique, adding a new layer to the dining and nightlife scene in the country.

The supper club blurs the lines between restaurant, bar, and club. For the architects, the venue, through its challenges and successes, pushed them to grow as a team. From start to finish, the venue offers an immersive yet cohesive experience. They express what they wanted to impart to guests: "By the time they leave, we hope they carry with them the memory of an atmosphere that felt complete: food, design, and energy all working together in one experience." ⊟



The tailored bar provides a distinct look to the private room, while maintaining the overall atmosphere of the venue.

"We envisioned the journey as a gradual reveal. That central bar anchors the design, while the more intimate pockets around it give balance and offer different ways to experience the space."

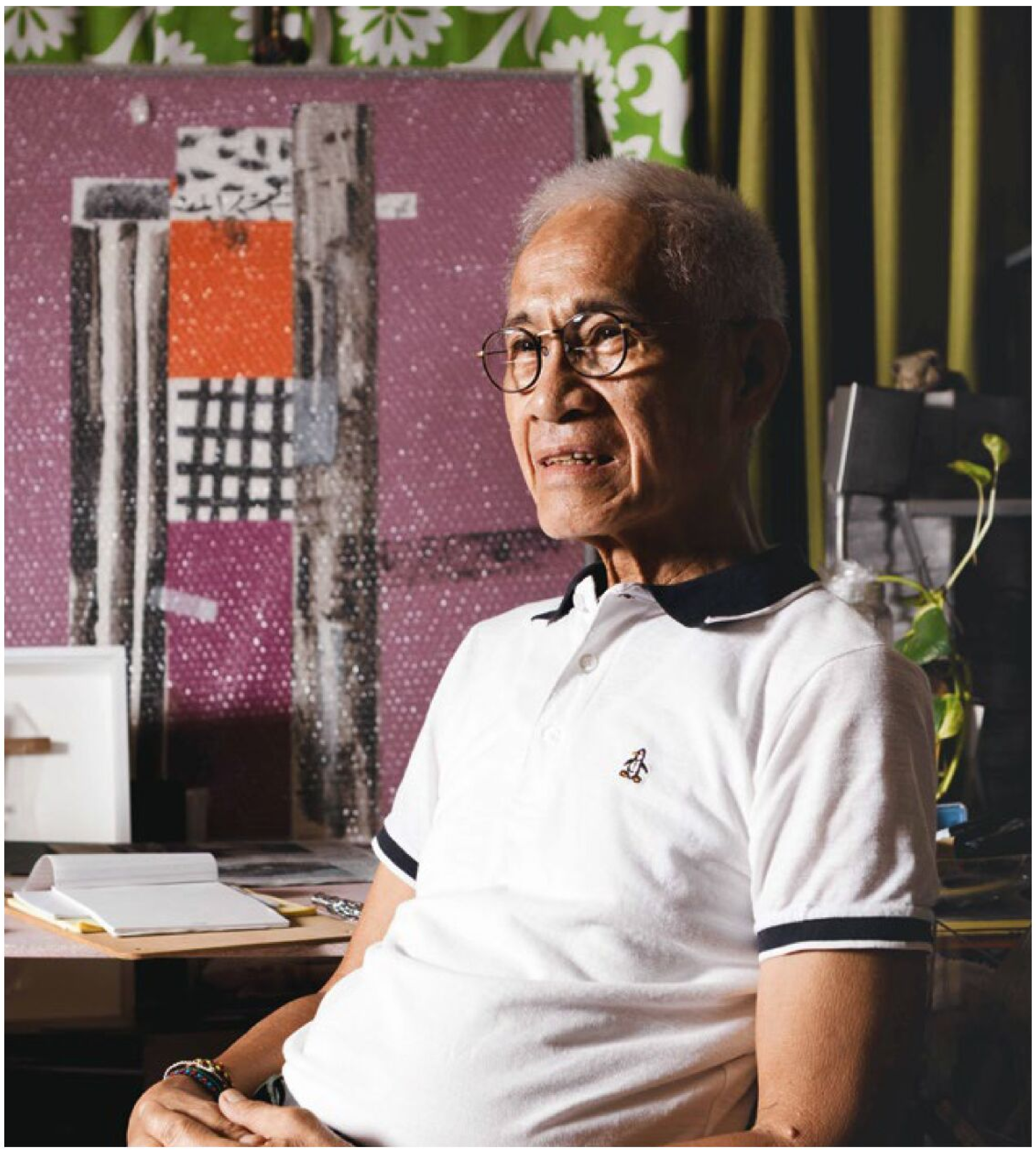
The dining club used materiality to express maximalism, with each upholstery pattern building upon one another to build depth and contrast.

The art of architecture evokes senses and unique dining experiences.

WRITTEN BY CARYLL ONG PHOTOGRAPHED BY EXCEL PANLAQUE

Kutong Lupa

The audacious art and radical return of conceptual artist Joe Bautista



Bautista's living room serves as his main art studio, where he is surrounded by his life's work as an artist.

Long before found objects and conceptual installations became mainstays in Philippine galleries, Joe Bautista—known as Joe Bau to those closest to him—was already redefining what art could be. As a key member of the influential "Shop 6" collective, he was a pioneering force in the 1970s, known for his audacious use of unconventional materials and politically charged work.

But at the height of his influence, he stepped away, leading to a decades-long hiatus from the art scene. Now, he has returned. The rediscovery of Joe Bautista's work reveals more than just a forgotten chapter of art history; it uncovers a model for artistic courage whose relevance in today's world is more potent than ever.

Roots of a Radical

At his peak, Bautista was revolutionary for using everyday, unconventional, and even controversial materials. This affinity was evident from the beginning. As an advertising major at the University of the East (UE), he joined national art competitions, including the Shell National Art Competition, where he won first place in the sculpture category.

After graduation, Bautista received an opportunity to exhibit at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). Through the introduction of his friend and fellow artist Rodolfo Gan, he approached then CCP director Roberto Chabet with an audacious idea. He arranged 12 boxes in a line stretching 12 feet, then threaded a dextrose tube glowing with light through each one, culminating in a plastic knot at the end.

Bautista recounts, "It's not a traditional sculpture that I learned from school, but this one is something different, where I want to express myself as an artist." His CCP debut kick-started his impact on the art scene, where he was eventually chosen as one of the recipients of the Thirteen Artists Awards (TAA).

Looking back, Bautista shares how those around him reacted to his courageous spirit and forward thinking. He states, "They made fun of me during that time because I was still young, but I was aggressive. And they were amused. When Bobby [Chabet] became my friend, he said to me, '*Ang lakas ng loob mo*, Joe, to apply at the CCP.'"

Bautista was referred to as a *"kutong lupa"* who seemingly emerged out of nowhere. However, this strong sense of self and confidence in his work laid the foundation for his career. It was his audacity that helped expand the definition of art in the Philippines, encouraging experimentation with found objects.

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The artist plays with unconventional materials such as discarded wooden blocks he picks up from construction sites.

Unsurprisingly, his unusual approach received both positive and negative reactions. “Their orientation was that they were the master,” he recalls. “ They were old school, and we are in the new school. Thus, we were getting made fun of. For me, I don’t care. I just want to explore.”

Pioneer of Conceptual and Installation Art

When asked about his creative inspirations, Bautista recalls the stacks of Art Forum—an international magazine dedicated to presenting the latest trends in modern and contemporary visual art—found in Chabet’s home. “I have an unusual way of creating art. This is the inspiration. For me, I saw how beautiful the artworks were... something different from us,” he expresses, proudly revealing a page from an issue that features his name.

Bautista was most active during the 1970s and 1980s. As a key member of the “Shop 6” collective, he was at the forefront of the Philippines’ conceptual art movement. The group challenged traditional notions by focusing on the idea behind the art rather than classical painting or sculpture. He looks back on this time of his life with passion, often voicing the impact the group had on both himself and the Filipino art scene. He states, “When we have [our] exhibitions, our individual characters come out. What art is supposed to be [for us]?”

But his decades-long stint in the art scene came to a halt in the 90s. “I stopped because I got married, and I needed to earn a living. You know, I needed to work at one company as an artist,” Bautista shares. It was only decades later, in 2019, when he reentered the art scene with Shop 6 Revisited.

In the same year, he presented Vertical and Horizontal Dreams, drawing inspiration from Japanese architect Tadao Ando. He took materials from construction sites, such as plywood and cement. The work deconstructed and reconstructed architectural forms, mimicking the structural forms of Ando, which are defined by their vertical and elongated design.

Bautista describes art as the food of his soul. Even after decades away from the art scene, his hunger for the unconventional continues.

Political Commentary During a Restrictive Era

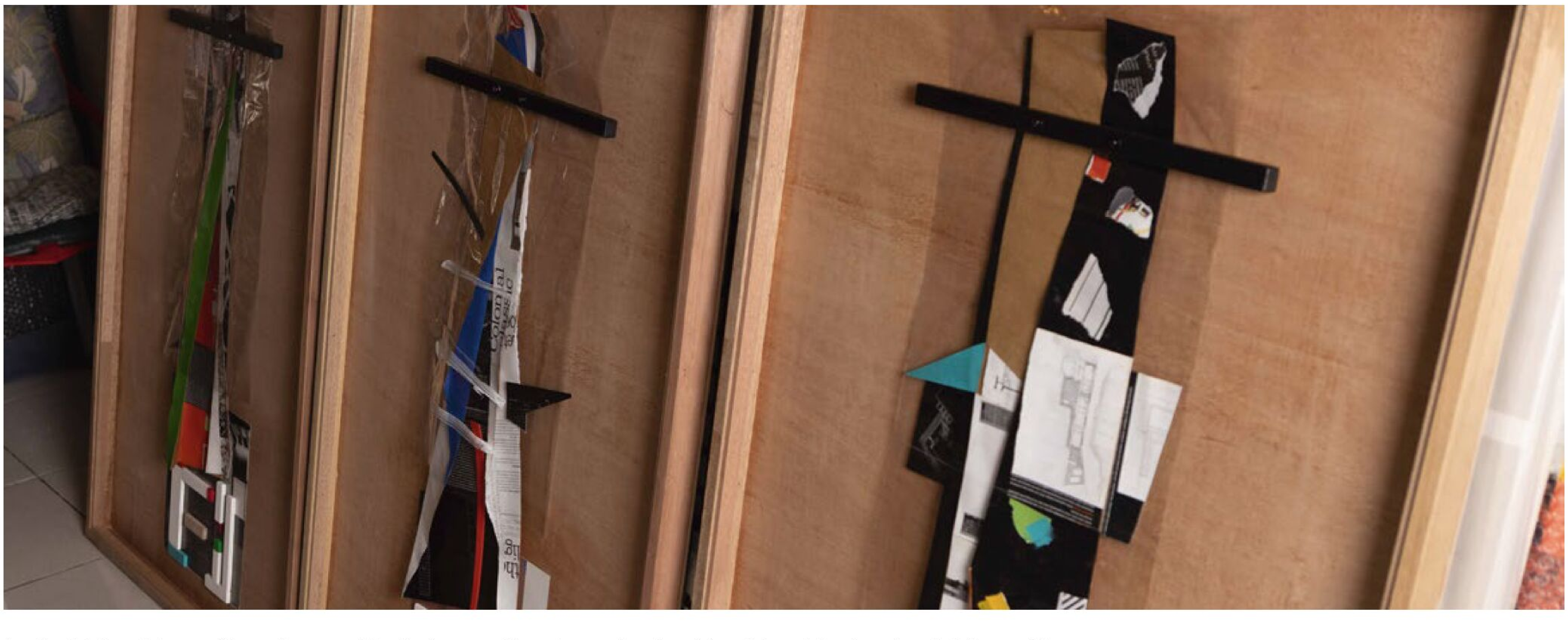
People have struggled to provide a conclusive answer on the place of politics in art. As an artist during a time of political unrest and state-sponsored violence under martial law, his art became a powerful political critique during the Marcos regime, whether intentionally or not.

In his 1979 CCP exhibition, Five Contemporary Sculptors, Bautista exhibited his work entitled Bubong. His sculpture utilized large sheets of corrugated iron, resembling the rooftops found in working-class Filipino homes. The artist leaned the sculpture against that wall to create the illusion of a sloped roof. Bubong only became a political statement when it provoked a negative reaction from Imelda Marcos.

Bautista recalls the First Lady’s reaction, “I heard the voice of Mrs. Romualdez Marcos: ‘We don’t have squatters here. I’m promoting the Philippines, and we don’t have squatters here.” His work was incongruent with the mores of the cultural elite. Through the use of local materials, he recreated a common scene often found in the slums of Manila. Exhibited inside the CCP, it stood in juxtaposition with the structure’s representation of national progress and development.

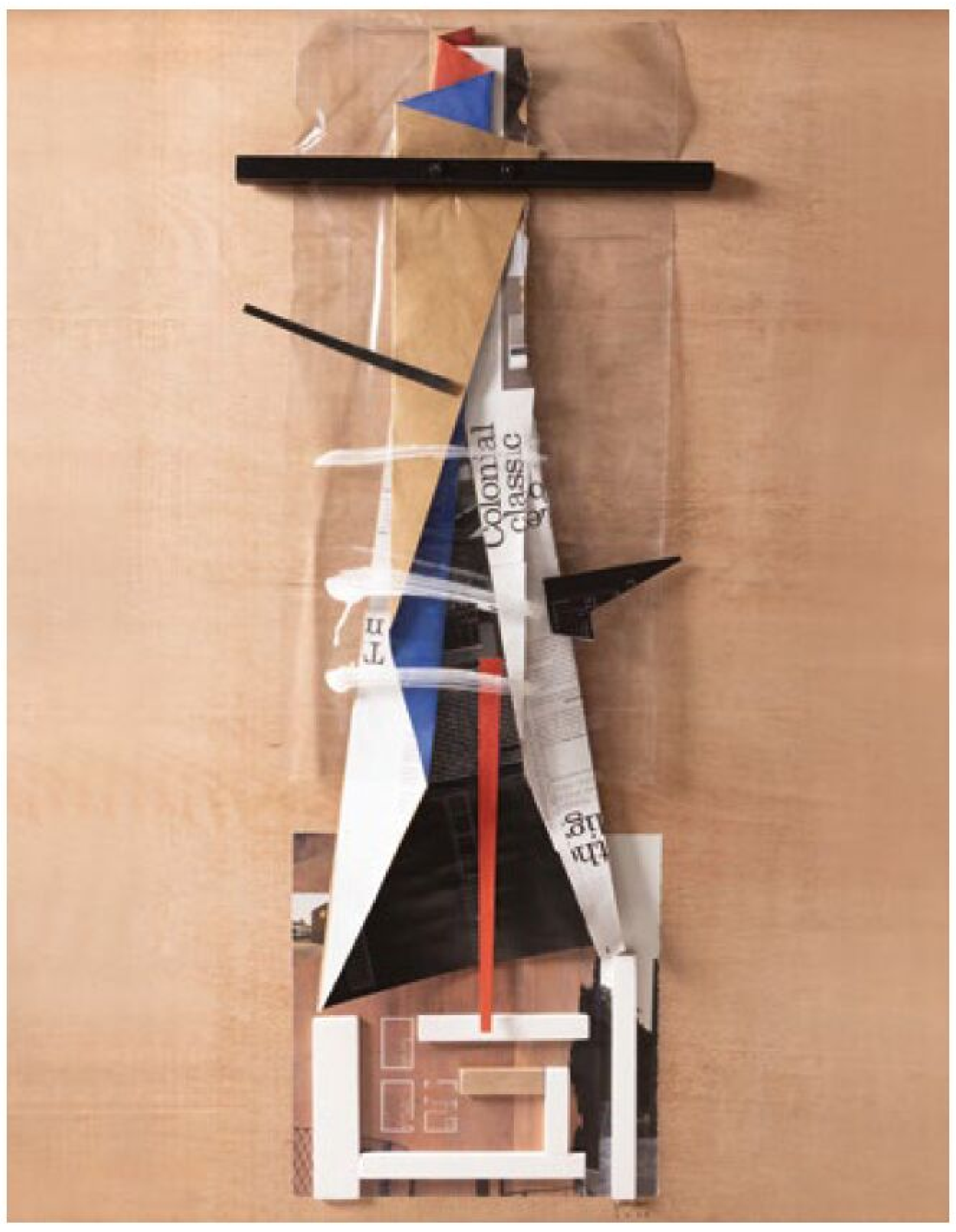
“When I [did] Bubong, it [didn’t] have to be a political art. I’m not knowledgeable, or I’m not thinking of the squatter or the situation. I [was] just fascinated to put the Bubong inside the gallery,” Bautista states.

In contrast, the installation Frigidaire was deliberately subversive, hiding protest materials within the piece. Opening the refrigerator revealed shelves of water bottles clouded by

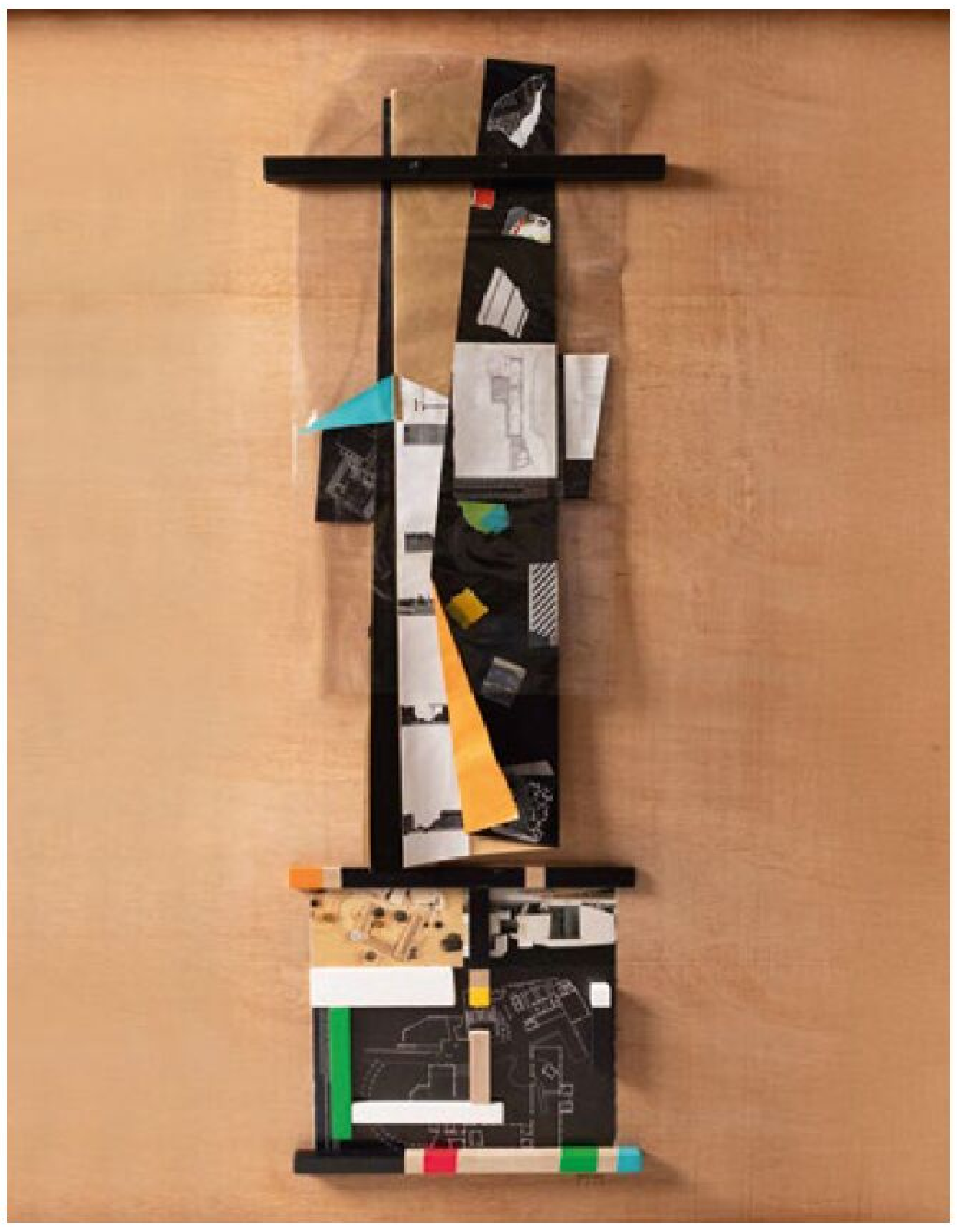


Joe Bautista’s past dream of becoming an architect is showcased in various works, where blueprints and structures heavily influenced him.

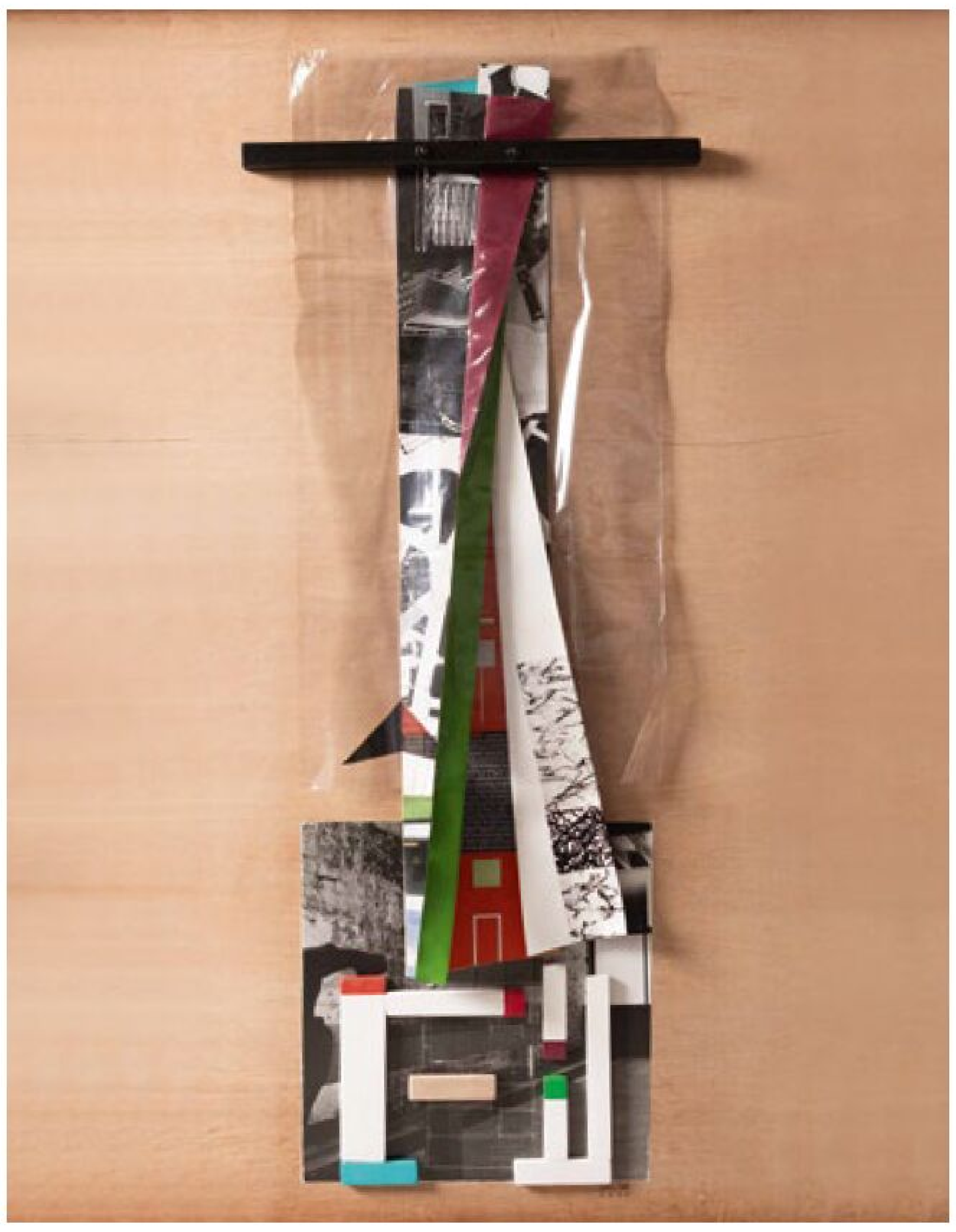
Joe Bautista keeps a sketch pad in his studio at all times, allowing him to sketch as soon as inspiration strikes.



The composition of this artwork was built around the structural plans of Japanese architect Tadao Ando.



In this abstract work of piled rectangular shapes, Bautista harmonizes architecture and geometry.



Bautista has an affinity for height in his architecturally inspired designs, with the neutral wooden background highlighting the vertical construction of the work.

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condensation, encouraging audiences to wipe the moisture away and uncover the hidden contents: photographs of the then-First Lady, protest pamphlets (polyetos), and clippings of current events. Though Bautista refrains from labeling his art as political, he has a contrary view regarding this particular installation. "This is my political art, but this was just nothing during that time... and activism was strong. So, I made this refrigerator," he humbly shares. His work proved that the simple act of telling the truth becomes a potent form of resistance when those in power wish to deny it.

"[I] have that food that [I] ate [during the] starting point in my art. Until now, I'm still eating it because that is who I am. That is how I was discovered. That is what I am known for," Bautista asserts. From the conceptual provocations of Shop 6 to the subversive commentary hidden in Frigidaire, Joe Bautista's legacy is one of fearless exploration. His journey—from a radical young artist who challenged the establishment, to a quiet hiatus, to his recent return—is a powerful affirmation of a persistent creative spirit. As he reflects, the artistic "food" that nourished him at the start is the same one he consumes today. This enduring vision is the core of his relevance. In a complex contemporary art world, Joe Bau's simple, powerful message to all artists remains the most vital: just continue making art, whether it is perfect or imperfect. ◼

JOE BAUTISTA

The conceptual inquiry by Joe Bautista objectifies painting to its polarity. In his recent series, paintings are composed of modular surfaces evoking horizontals and verticals, base squares and formats. Typically placed on the exhibition walls, the painting units released with experimental risqué across the gallery floor. A unique feature of the paintings is its relational aspect: it invites the participation of the viewer to arrange and compose within the work transparent sheets that have the artist's gestural markings. To surmise, the artist's inquiry posits: Is painting in a state of influx? Is it the artist's intention to demystify the purity of painting and subvert a class elitism attached to its advanced explorations which, most of the time, leaves audiences out in the cold? However, it can be opined the participatory aspect of the paintings is a didactic experience, and in the bigger picture, offers an opportunity to understand such difficult art formats. The most seasoned practitioner of the exhibition, "Sir JoeBau," a fondly known monicker, was part of the fabled conceptual art group Shop 6 in the 1960s, alongside artists Roberto Chabet, Fernando Modesto, Yolanda Laodico, and Danilo Dalena.

The artist catalogs of his previous exhibitions around his home, as he creates a living space full of his life's work as an artist.

Joe Bautista is a veteran figure in the realm of conceptualism, as he continues to reconstruct and deconstruct unconventional forms through different materials.

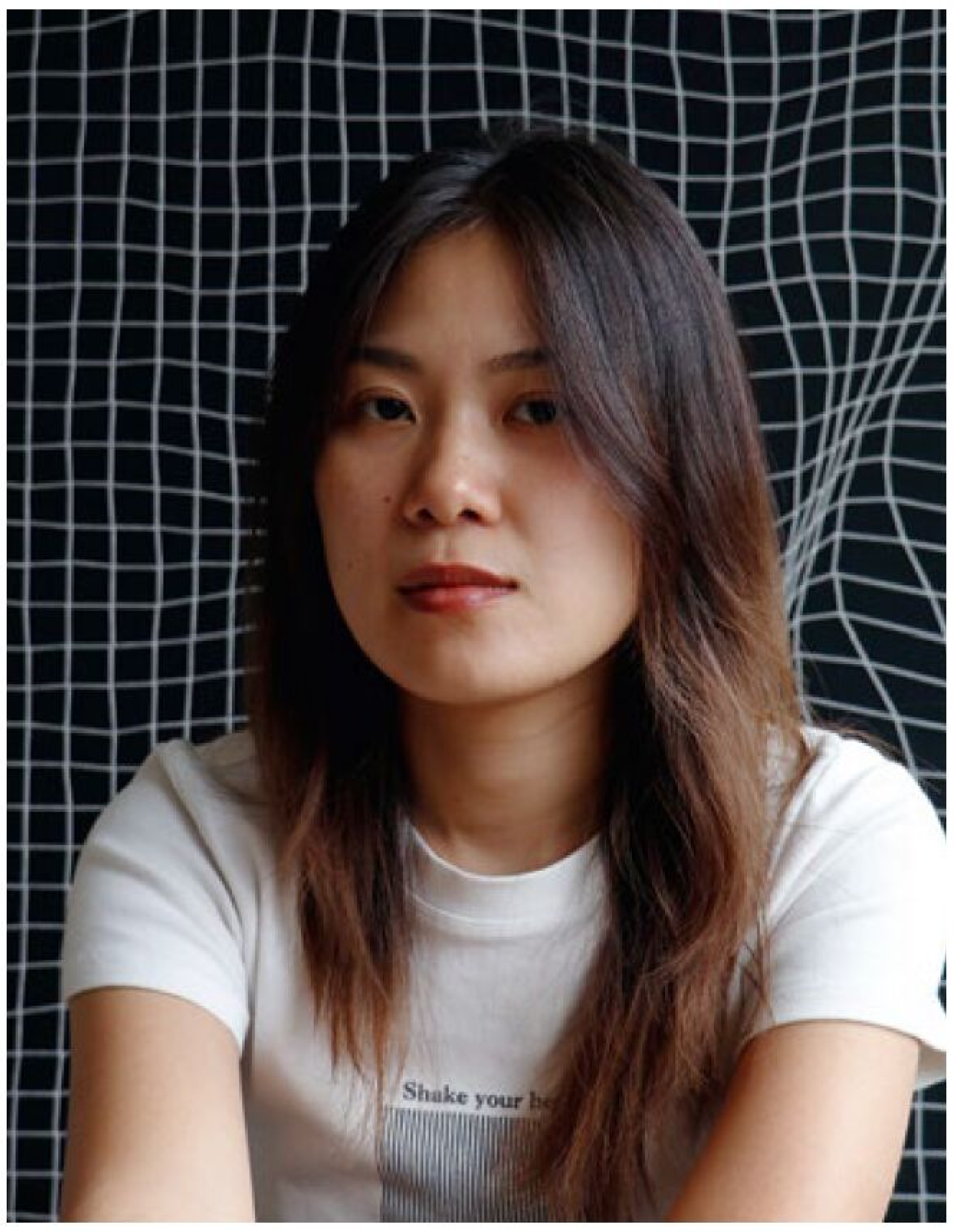
WRITTEN BY DANIEL LAMPA IMAGES PROVIDED BY THE ARTISTS

Meet the artists whose bold practices are redefining how culture, history, and imagination come alive today

The New Vanguard of Philippine Art

The Philippine art scene is in constant motion, shaped by artists who are unafraid to take risks and imagine new ways of seeing. In galleries, museums, and unexpected spaces, a generation of voices is redefining what it means to create within a rich yet complex cultural fabric. These artists are not only presenting work at home but also abroad, where the Philippines is increasingly recognized as a site of innovation.

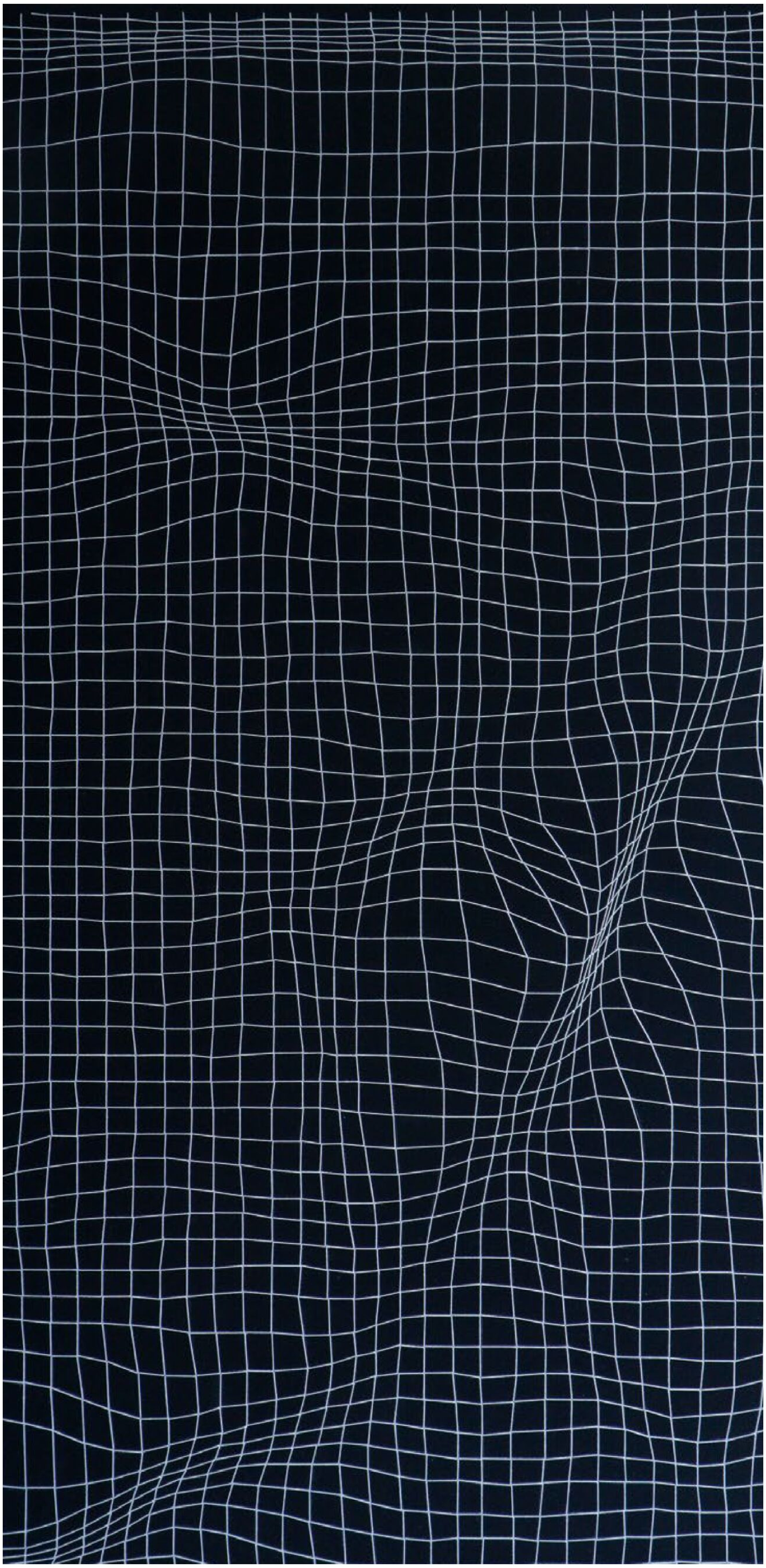
What unites them is not a single style or school but a shared curiosity about the world and a commitment to making art that resonates across contexts. Their practices are layered, experimental, and deeply engaged with questions of identity, culture, and imagination. Together they trace a landscape that is rooted yet wide-reaching, contemporary yet attuned to history. Rather than chasing trends, Nice Buenaventura, Kris Ardeña, Celine Lee, Nicole Coson, and Datu Arellano are reshaping the Philippine art scene by pushing the boundaries of artistic possibility.



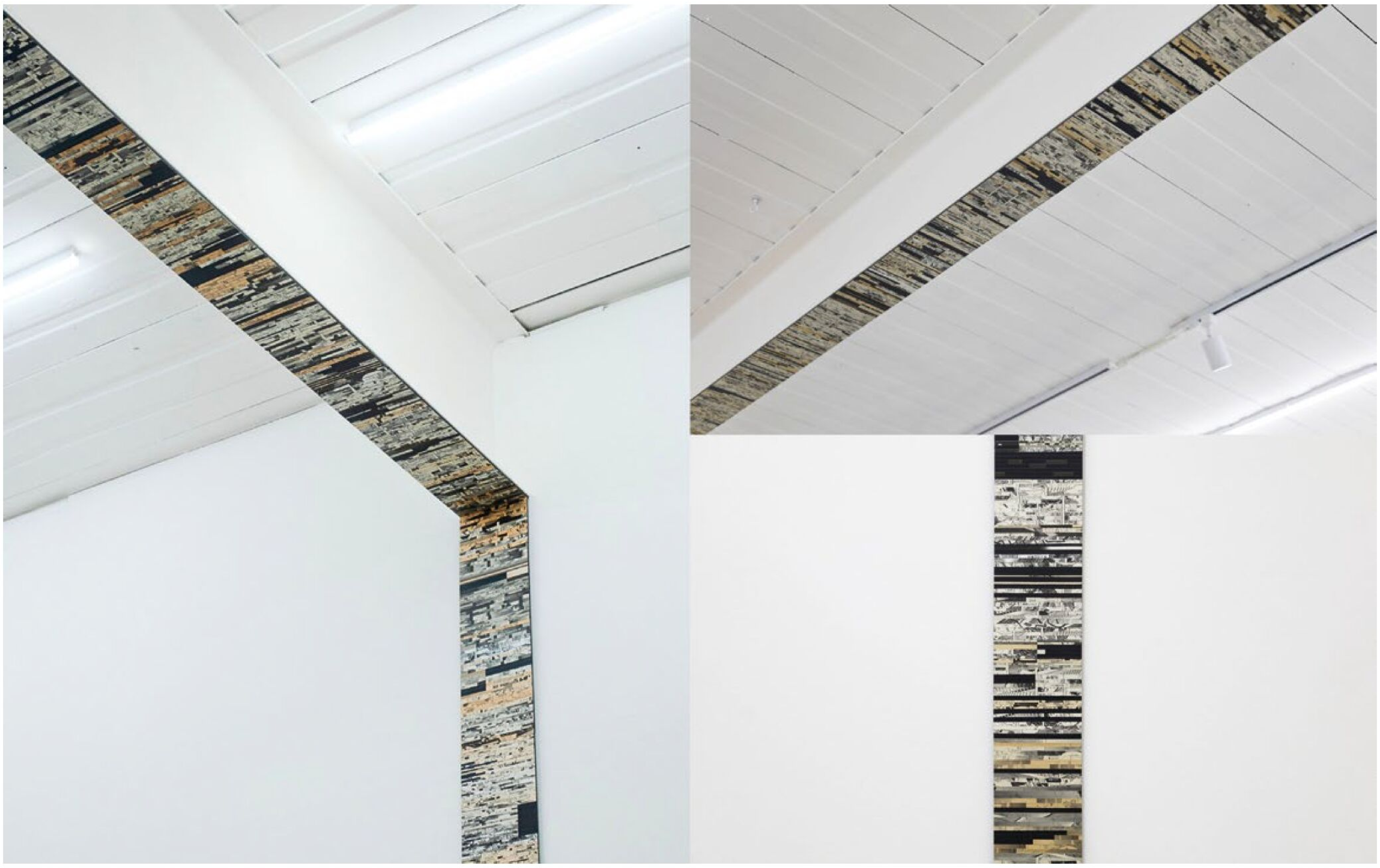
Celine Lee

Celine Lee approaches her practice as a way to uncover the invisible structures that shape how we live. Her work spans painting, sculpture, embroidery, and installation, guided by an interest in natural sciences and metaphysical questions. Rather than focusing solely on representation, she treats process and materiality as central to her exploration, letting each medium carry its own weight of meaning. The result is work that feels both grounded and ethereal, inviting viewers to pause and reflect on their own experience of space and form.

Her recognition from institutions such as the Ateneo Art Awards and the Philippine Art Awards underscores the strength of her vision, but it is the intimacy of her projects that leaves a lasting impression. Lee's practice demonstrates how curiosity can be a form of art, where the search for knowledge becomes inseparable from creative expression. She brings sensitivity to every material she engages with, turning even quiet gestures into profound statements. In doing so, she marks herself as one of the most thoughtful and compelling artists of her generation. can act as a mirror to society while also offering a tool for transformation. In Buenaventura's hands, art is never static but constantly unfolding, much like the communities and ideas it seeks to reflect.



"Untitled" by Celine Lee is a delicate exploration of geometry and texture through thread on Aida cloth.



"Long Story (Parse This Picture #rJ15dfpN)" by Datu Arellano layers shredded manga pages, black paper, and acrylic on PVC board, creating a charged composition anchored by steel and magnets.

Datu Arellano

Thriving in multiplicity, Datu Arellano's practice treats art not as a single discipline but as a field of intersections. He is a visual artist, musician, designer, and educator, moving between drawing, painting, sound, video, and performance with remarkable ease. Beyond producing objects or installations, he constructs instruments and sound devices that expand the very vocabulary of artistic creation. His collaborations with filmmakers, musicians, and institutions highlight the collective dimension of his practice, but his personal projects carry equal weight. Works such as his Tahigami series and the Wonderpole Project embody his constant search for new forms of expression, where the act of making is inseparable from the act of questioning.

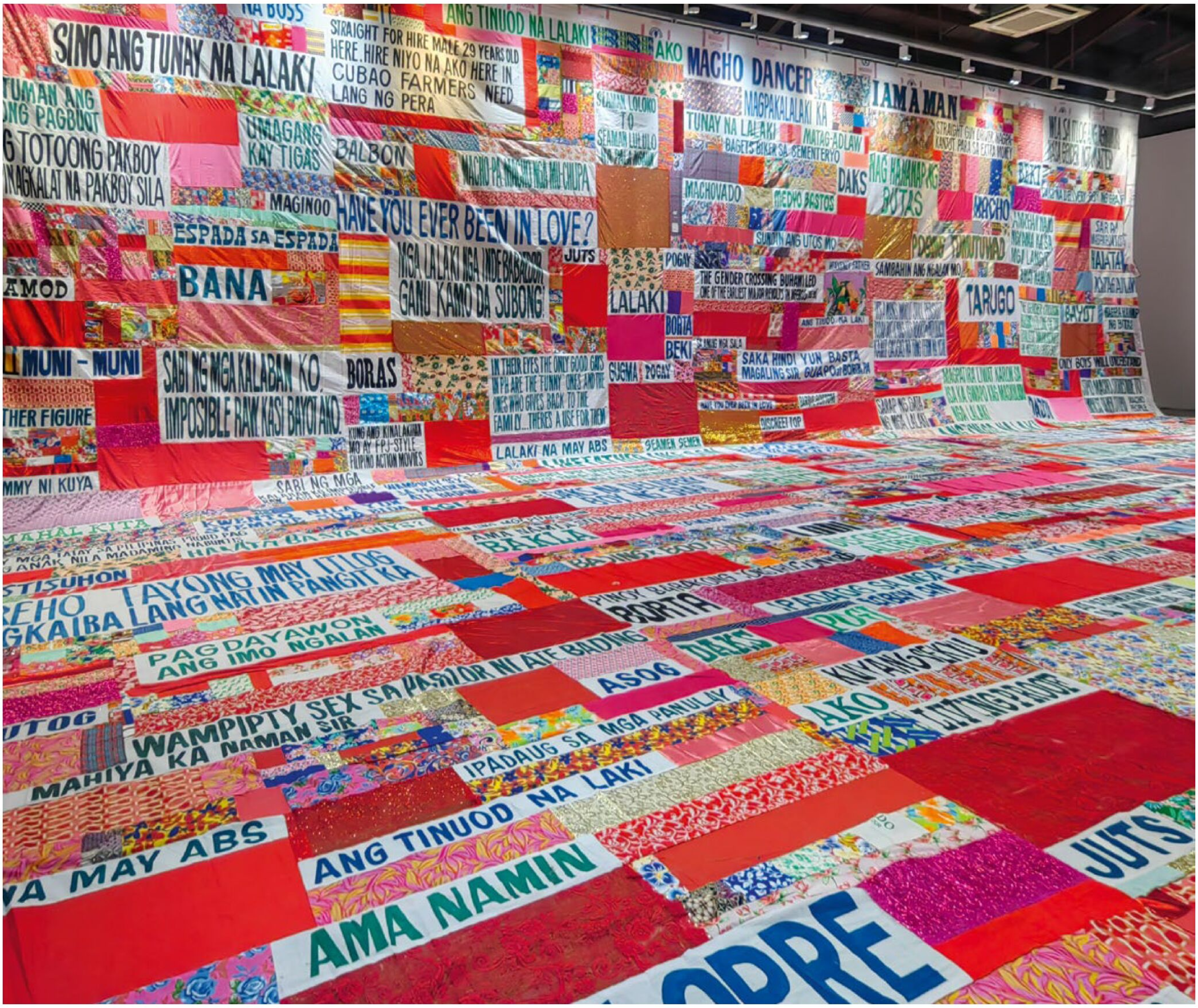
Arellano treats experimentation itself as an outcome, showing that process can be just as important as product. This openness reflects a philosophy where art is alive, always shifting and adapting, always listening and responding. By weaving together visual and sonic experiences, he challenges audiences to engage with art in ways that move beyond the eye into the realm of sensation.

Kristoffer Ardeña

Moving with ease between mediums, Kris Ardeña creates works that can take the form of painting, sculpture, photography, performance, or readymade objects. His projects often transform entire spaces into environments that challenge perception and invite immersion.

Having lived and worked in multiple continents, he carries with him a wide set of references, yet his work remains firmly tied to the Philippines. This fluidity allows him to engage with audiences in Madrid, Mexico, or Manila without losing the distinct perspective of his own cultural roots. Ardeña is a reminder that Philippine art is not confined to the archipelago but exists as part of a larger, global conversation.

His practice is marked by bold experimentation, where each choice of material or format opens a new way of seeing. By resisting categorization, he expands what contemporary art can look like and how it can be experienced. Through this restlessness, he positions himself as a key figure who keeps the Philippine art scene dynamic and internationally connected.


SINO ANG TUNAY NA LALAKI
STRAIGHT FOR HIRE MALE 29 YEARS OLD HERE. HIRE NIYO NA AKO HERE IN CUBAO FARMERS NEED LANG NG PERA
ANG TINUOD NA LALAKI
MACHO DANCER
TOTOONG PAKBOY
UMAGANG KAY TIGAS
BALBON
MAGINOO
ESPADA SA ESPADA
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE?
MGA LALAKI NGA INDE BABALOD GANU KAMO DA SUBONG
BANA
LALAKI
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SABI NG MGA KALABAN KO IMPOSIBLE RAW KASI BAYOT AKO
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TAYONG MAY ITLOG LANG NATIN PANGIT KA
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WAMPIPTY SEX SA
MAHIYA KA NAMAN SIR
IPADAUG SA MGA PANULAY
ANG TINUOD NA LAKI
AMA NAMIN
MAY ABS
JUTS

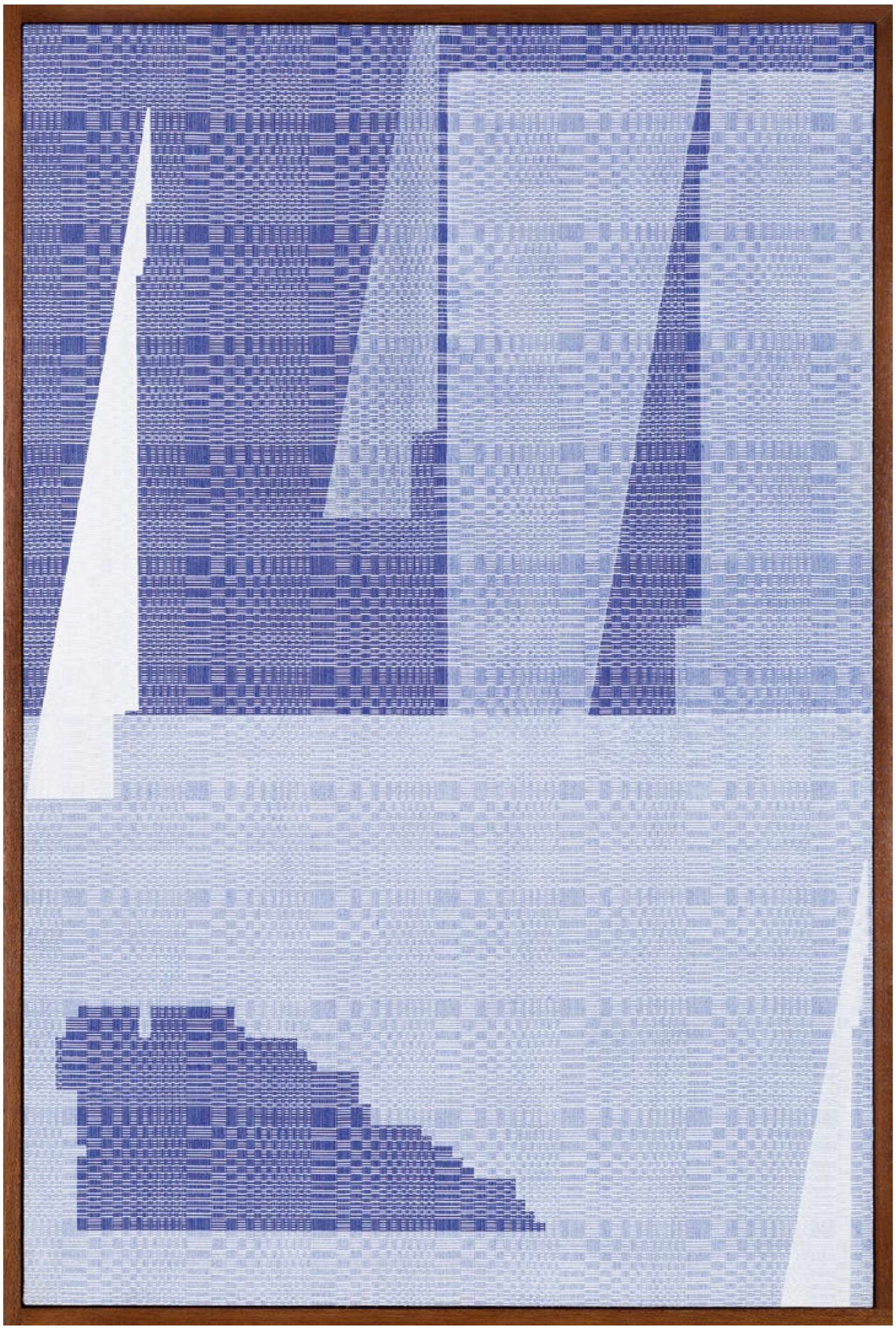
Ardeña's "Ghost Painting (Toldo Series): Pagkalalake" explores identity and memory through layered gestures and material tactility, using elastomeric paint on coco bapor fabric to create a quietly powerful presence.

Nice Buenaventura

Nice Buenaventura creates art that thrives in tension, where the pull between ethics and aesthetics becomes a space for invention. Working across drawing, painting, installation, new media, and citizen ethnography, she treats her practice as an act of investigation as much as expression.

Her project Tropikalye reflects this ethos, functioning as a co-learning resource that studies vernacular culture in the Philippines. Buenaventura traces links between issues that at first seem unrelated, weaving them together through the logic of the archipelago, where connection across distance is natural. Her recognition from major institutions is matched by her ability to build projects that are collaborative and generative, positioning art as a way to learn together rather than in isolation.

What makes her practice remarkable is the way it insists on openness, embracing process and dialogue as part of the work itself. She shows that contemporary art can act as a mirror to society while also offering a tool for transformation. In Buenaventura's hands, art is never static but constantly unfolding, much like the communities and ideas it seeks to reflect.



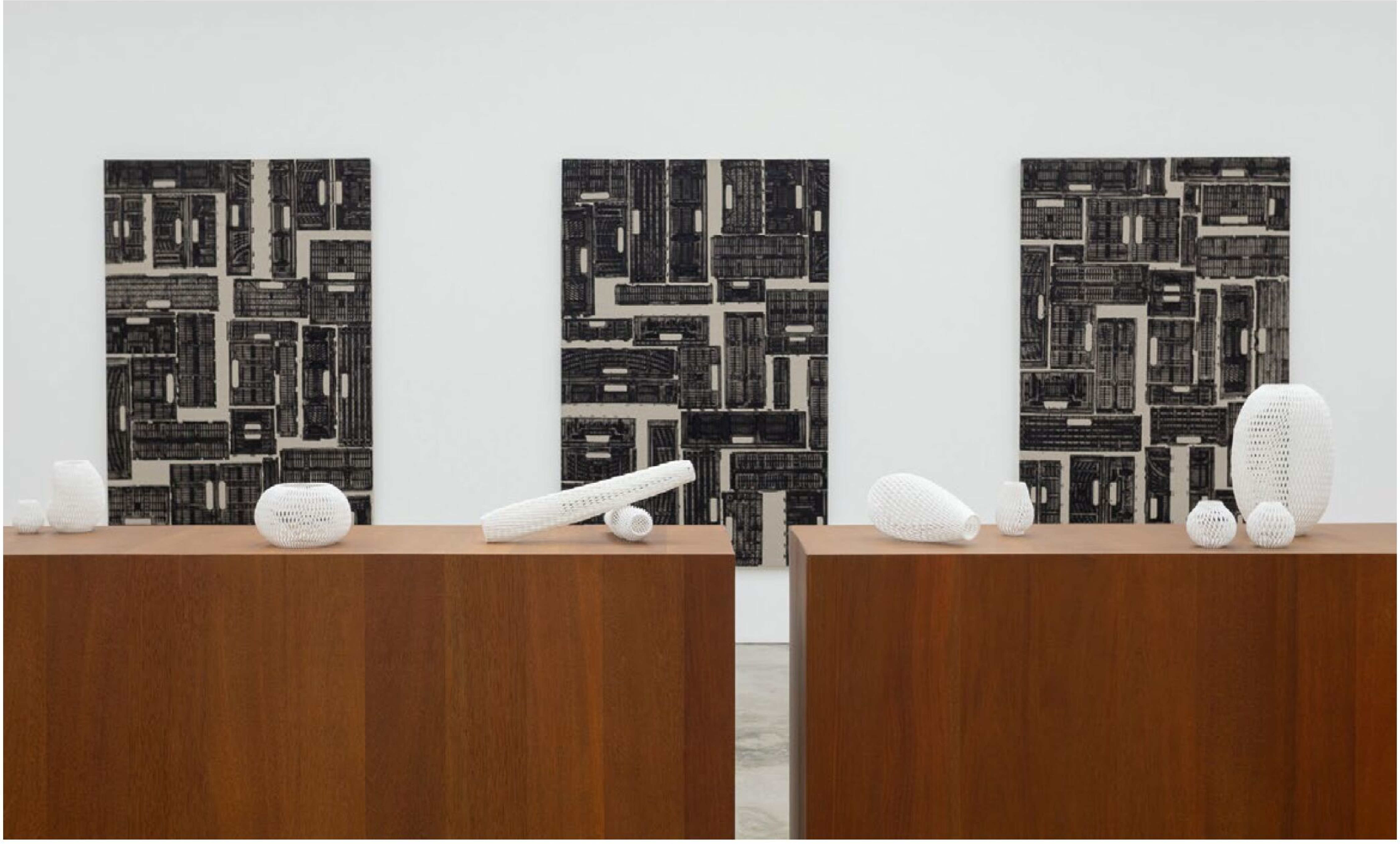
"Mt. Pareidolia (4), with weaving by Charlotte Tejada" by Buenaventura blends acrylic painting with traditional binakol, creating a dialogue between contemporary expression and Filipino textile heritage.

Nicole Coson

Exploring the delicate space between surface and depth, presence and absence, Nicole Coson works across printmaking, painting, and sculpture. She uses found objects pressed onto canvas to create impressions that are both physical and elusive. These patterns, drawn from everyday material culture, often take the form of camouflage, blinds, or woven textures that resist direct interpretation.

Coson embraces opacity as an aesthetic and political gesture, inviting viewers to reflect on what is concealed as much as what is shown. Her work suggests that memory and history are not linear stories but layered experiences that can be glimpsed through fragments and traces. By choosing to work with barriers rather than transparent images, she creates art that asks audiences to linger, to study, and to confront the unseen.

Her exhibitions across Asia, Europe, and the Americas position her as an artist whose questions about identity and visibility resonate in diverse contexts. Coson demonstrates how Filipino art can speak powerfully by withholding as much as it reveals, making ambiguity a form of clarity in itself.



Working across various media, Coson turns everyday textures into layered reflections on memory, identity, and visibility.

Diversity and Depth

Together, these five artists offer a portrait of Philippine art that is bold, diverse, and unafraid of complexity. Their works span continents and disciplines, yet remain deeply connected to the cultural and social realities of the Philippines. What they share is not a single aesthetic but a drive to question and to expand, to treat art as both mirror and compass. In their practices, the local and the global are never in conflict but in conversation, producing works that resonate across time and place. They remind us that art is not only about what is made, but also about how it shapes the way we see, think, and connect. Through their explorations, the Philippine art scene continues to grow not just in scale, but in depth and imagination. ▣

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